

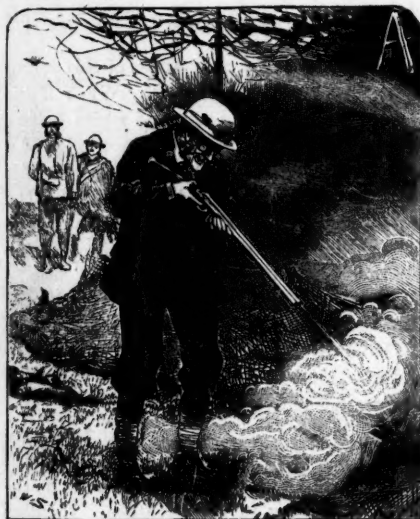
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White Wings: A Yachting Romance.

CHAPTER XX.

CHASING A THUNDERSTORM.



“All on board, then—all on board!” the summons comes ringing through the wonder-land of dreams. And then, amid the general hurry and scurry throughout the house, certain half-bewildered people turn first of all to the windows of their rooms: a welcome sight! The glory of the summer dawn is shining over the mountains; the *White Dove*, with nearly all her sail set, is swinging there at her moorings; best of all, a strong breeze—apparently from the north-east—is ruffling the dark blue seas

and driving a line of white surf on the further shores. The news comes that Master Fred, by darting about in the dingy since ever daylight began, has got the very last basket on board; the red caps

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are even now bringing the gig in to the landing slip; John of Skye is all impatience to take advantage of the favourable wind. There is but little time lost; the happy-go-lucky procession—*dona ferentes*—set out for the beach. And if the Laird is pleased to find his nephew apparently falling into his scheme with a good grace; and if the nephew thinks he is very lucky to get so easily out of an awkward predicament; and if Mary Avon—unconscious of these secret designs—is full of an eager delight at the prospect of being allowed to set to work again—may not all this account for a certain indecorous gaiety that startles the silence of the summer morning? Or is it that mythical hero Homesh who is responsible for this laughter? We hear the Laird chuckling; we notice the facetious wrinkles about his eyes; we make sure it must be Homesh. Then the final consignment of books, shawls, gun-cases, and what not is tossed into the gig; and away we go, with the measured dash of the oars.

And what does the bearded John of Skye think of the new hand we have brought him? Has he his own suspicions? Is his friend and sworn ally, Dr. Sutherland, to be betrayed and supplanted in his absence?

"Good morning, sir," he says obediently, at the gangway; and the quick Celtic eyes glance at Howard Smith from top to toe.

"Good morning, captain," the young man says lightly; and he springs too quickly up the steps, making a little bit of a stumble. This is not an auspicious omen.

Then on deck: the handsome figure and pleasant manner of this young man ought surely to prepossess people in his favour. What if his tightly-fitting garments and his patent-leather boots and white gaiters are not an orthodox yachting rig? John of Skye would not judge of a man by his costume. And if he does not seem quite at home—in this first look round—everyone is not so familiar with boating life as Dr. Sutherland. It is true, an umbrella used as a walking-stick looks strange on board a yacht; and he need not have put it on the curved top of the companion, for it immediately rolls over into the scuppers. Nor does he seem to see the wickedness of placing a heavy bundle of canvases on the raised skylight of the ladies' cabin; does he want to start the glass? Dr. Sutherland, now, would have given the men a hand in hauling up the gig. Dr. Sutherland would not have been in the way of the tiller, as the yacht is released from her moorings.

Unaware of this rapid criticism, and unconcerned by all the bustle going on around, our new friend is carelessly and cheerfully chatting with his hostess; admiring the yacht; praising the beauty of the summer morning; delighted with the prospect of sailing in such weather. He does not share in the profound curiosity of his uncle about the various duties of the men. When John of Skye, wishing to leave the tiller for a minute, to overhaul the lee tackle, turns quite naturally to Mary Avon, who is standing by him, and says with a grin of apology, "If ye please,

mem," the young man betrays but little surprise that this young lady should be entrusted with the command of the vessel.

"What!" he says, with a pleasant smile—they seem on very friendly terms already—"can you steer, Miss Avon? Mind you don't run us against any rocks."

Miss Avon has her eye on the mainsail. She answers, with a business-like air—

"Oh, there is no fear of that. What I have to mind, with this wind, is not to let her gybe, or I should get into disgrace."

"Then I hope you won't let her gybe, whatever that is," said he with a laugh.

Never was any setting-out more auspicious. We seemed to have bade farewell to those perpetual calms. Early as it was in the morning, there was no still, dream-like haze about the mountains; there was a clear greenish-yellow where the sunlight struck them; the great slopes were dappled with the shadows of purple-brown; further away the tall peaks were of a decided blue. And then the windy, fresh, brisk morning; the *White Dove* running races with the driven seas; the white foam flying away from her sides. John of Skye seemed to have no fear of this gentle skipper. He remained forward, superintending the setting of the topsail; the *White Dove* was to "have it" while the fresh breeze continued to blow.

And still the squally north-easter bears her bravely onward, the puffs darkening the water as they pass us and strike the rushing seas. Is that a shadow of Colonsay on the far southern horizon? The lighthouse people here have gone to bed; there is not a single figure along the yellow-white walls. Look at the clouds of gulls on the rocks, resting after their morning meal. By this time the deer have retreated into the high slopes above Craignure; there is a white foam breaking along the bay of Innismore. And still the *White Dove* spins along, with foam-diamonds glittering in the sunlight at her bows; and we hear the calling of the sea-swallows, and the throbbing of a steamer somewhere in among the shadows of Loch Aline. Surely now we are out of the reign of calms; the great boom strains at the sheets; there is a whirl of blue waters; the *White Dove* has spread her wings at last.

"Ay, ay," says John of Skye, who has relieved Miss Avon at the helm; "it is a great peety."

"Why, John?" says she, with some surprise; is he vexed that we should be sailing well on this fine sailing day?

"It iss a great peety that Mr. Sutherland not here," said John, "and he wass know so much about a yacht, and day after day not a breeze at ahl. There iss not many chentlemen will know so much about a yacht as Mr. Sutherland."

Miss Avon did not answer, though her face seemed conscious in its colour. She was deeply engaged in a novel.

"Oh, that is the Mr. Sutherland who has been with you," said

Howard Smith to his hostess, in a cheerful way. "A doctor, I think you said?"

At this Miss Avon looked up quickly from her book.

"I should have thought," said she with a certain dignity of manner, "that most people had heard of Dr. Angus Sutherland."

"Oh, yes, no doubt," said he, in the most good-natured fashion. "I know about him myself—it must be the same man. A nephew of Lord Foyers, isn't he? I met some friends of his at a house last winter; they had his book with them—the book about tiger-hunting in Nepal, don't you know?—very interesting indeed it was, uncommonly interesting. I read it right through one night when everybody else was in bed——"

"Why, that is Captain Sutherland's book," said his hostess, with just a trace of annoyance. "They are not even related. How can you imagine that Angus Sutherland would write a book about tiger-hunting?—he is one of the most distinguished men of science in England."

"Oh, indeed," says the young man, with the most imperturbable good humour. "Oh, yes, I am sure I have heard of him—the Geographical Society, or something like that; really those evenings are most amusing. The women are awfully bored, and yet they do keep their eyes open somehow. But about those Indian fellows; it was only last winter that I heard how the —— manages to make those enormous bags, all to his own gun, that you see in the papers. Haven't you noticed them?"

Well, some of us had been struck with amazement by the reports of the enormous slaughter committed by a certain Indian prince; and had wondered at one of the gentle natives of the East taking so thoroughly and successfully to our robust English sports.

"Why," said this young man, "he has every covert laid out with netting, in small squares like a dice-board; and when he has done blazing away in the air, the under-keepers come up and catch every pheasant, hare, and rabbit that has run into the netting, and kill them, and put them down to his bag. Ingenious, isn't it? But I'll tell you what I have seen myself. I have seen Lord Justice —— deliberately walk down a line of netting and shoot every pheasant and rabbit that had got entangled. 'Safer not to let them get away,' says he. And when his host came up he said, 'Very good shooting; capital. I have got four pheasants and seven rabbits there; I suppose the beaters will pick them up.'"

And so the Youth, as we had got to call him, rattled on, relating his personal experiences, and telling such stories as occurred to him. There was a good sprinkling of well-known names in this desultory talk; how could Miss Avon fail to be interested, even if the subject-matter was chiefly composed of pheasant-shooting, private theatricals, billiard matches on wet days, and the other amusements of country life?

The Laird, when he did turn aside from that huge volume of *Muni-*

capital London—which he had brought with him for purposes of edification—must have seen and approved. If the young man's attentions to Mary Avon were of a distinctly friendly sort, if they were characterised by an obvious frankness, if they were quite as much at the disposal of Mr. Smith's hostess, what more could be expected? Rome was not built in a day. Meanwhile Miss Avon seemed very well pleased with her new companion.

And if it may have occurred to one or other of us that Howard Smith's talking, however pleasant and good-natured and bright, was on a somewhat lower level than that of another of our friends, what then? Was it not better fitted for idle sailing among summer seas? Now, indeed, our good friend the Laird had no need to fear being startled by the sudden propounding of conundrums.

He was startled by something else. Coming up from luncheon, we found that an extraordinary darkness prevailed in the western heavens—a strange bronze-purple gloom that seemed to contain within it the promise of a hundred thunderstorms. And as this fair wind had now brought us within sight of the open Atlantic, the question was whether we should make for Skye or run right under this lurid mass of cloud that appeared to lie all along the western shores of Mull. Unanimously the vote was for the latter course. Had not Angus Sutherland been anxious all along to witness a thunderstorm at sea? Might it not be of inestimable value to Miss Avon? John of Skye, not understanding these reasons, pointed out that the wind had backed somewhat to the north, and that Mull would give us surer shelter than Skye for the night. And so we bore away past Quinish, the brisk breeze sending the *White Dove* along in capital style; past the mouth of Loch Cuan; past the wild Cailleach Point; past the broad Calgary Bay; and past the long headland of Ru-Tre'nish. It was a strange afternoon. The sun was hidden; but in the south and west there was a wan, clear, silver glow on the sea; and in this white light the islands of Lunga, and Fladda, and Staffa, and the Dutchman were of a sombre purple. Darker still were the islands lying towards the land—Gometra, and Ulva, and Inch Kenneth; while the great rampart of cliff from Loch-na-Keal to Loch Scridain was so wrapped in gloom that momentarily we watched for the first quivering flash of the lightning. Then the wind died away. The sea grew calm. On the glassy grey surface the first drops of the rain fell—striking black, and then widening out in small circles. We were glad of the cool rain, but the whispering of it sounded strangely in the silence.

Then, as we are still watching for the first silver-blue flash of the lightning, behold! the mighty black wall of the Bourg and Gribun cliffs slowly, mysteriously disappears; and there is only before us a vague mist of grey. Colonsay is gone; Inch Kenneth is gone; no longer can we make out the dark rocks of Erisgeir. And then the whispering of the sea increases; there is a deeper gloom overhead; the rain-king is upon us.

There is a hasty retreat downstairs; the hatches are shoved over; after dinner we shall see what this strange evening portends.

"I hope we shall get into the Sound of Ulva before dark," says Miss Avon.

"I wish Angus was on board. It is a shame he should be cheated out of his thunderstorm. But we shall have the equinoctials for him, at all events," says Queen Titania—just as if she had a series of squalls and tempests bottled, labelled, and put on a shelf.

When we get on deck again we find that the evening, but not the *White Dove*, has advanced. There is no wind; there is no rain; around us there is the silent, glassy, lilac-grey sea, which, far away in the west, has one or two gleams of a dull bronze on it, as if some afterglow were struggling through the clouds at the horizon. Along the Gribun cliffs, and over the islands, the gloom has surely increased; it were better if we were in some shelter for this night.

Then a noise is heard that seems to impose a sudden silence—thunder, low, distant, and rumbling. But there is no splendid gleam through the gathering gloom of the night: the Gribun cliffs have not spoken yet.

John of Skye has carelessly seated himself on one of the deck-stools; his arm hangs idly on the tiller; we guess, rather than hear, that he is regaling himself with the sad, monotonous *Farewell to Fuinera*. He has got on his black oilskins, though there is not a drop of rain.

By-and-by, however, he jumps to his feet, and appears to listen intently.

"Ay, do you hear it?" he says, with a short laugh. "And it is off the land it is coming!"

He calls aloud—

"Look out, boys! it is a squall coming over, and we'll hev the topsail down whatever."

Then we hear a roaring in the dark; and presently the headsails are violently shaken, and the great boom swings over as John puts the helm up to get way on her. The next instant we are racing in for the land, as if we mean to challenge the heavy squall that is tearing across from the unseen Gribun cliffs. And now the rain-clouds break in deluges; the men in their black oilskins go staggering this way and that along the slippery decks; the *White Dove* is wrestling with the sudden storm; another low murmur of thunder comes booming through the darkness. What is that solitary light far in there towards the land?—dare any steamer venture so near the shore on such a night? And we, too; would it not be safer for us to turn and run out to sea rather than beat against a squall into the narrow and shallow channels of Ulva's Sound? But John of Skye is not afraid. The wind and sea cannot drown his strident voice; the rain deluge cannot blind the trained eyes; the men on the look-out—when the bow of the boat springs high on a wave, we

can see the black figures against the sombre sky—know the channels too; we are not afraid to make for Ulva's Sound.

There is a wild cry from one of the women; she has caught sight, through the gloom, of white foam dashing on the rocks.

"It is all right, mem!" John calls aloud, with a laugh; but all the same the order is shouted, "*Ready about!*"—"Ready about!" is the call coming back to us from the darkness. "*'Bout ship!*" and then away she sheers from that ugly coast.

We were after all cheated of our thunderstorm, but it was a wild and a wet night nevertheless. Taking in the mizen was no joke amid this fury of wind and rain, but that and the hauling up of the main-tack lessened the pressure on her. John of Skye was in high spirits. He was proud of his knowledge of the dangerous coast; where less familiar eyes saw only vague black masses looming out of the darkness he recognised every rock and headland.

"No, no, mem," he was calling out in friendly tones; "we not hef to run out to sea at ahl. We will get into the Sound of Ulva ferry well; and there will not be any better anchorage as the Sound of Ulva, when you are acquaint. But a stranger—I not ask a stranger to go into the Sound of Ulva on so dark a night."

What is this we hear?—"Down foresail, boys!"—and there is a rattle on to the decks. The head of the yacht seems to sway round; there is a loud flapping of sails. "*Down chub!*"—and there are black figures struggling up there at the bowsprit; but vaguely seen against the blackness of the sky and the sea. Then, in a second or two, there is a fiercer rattle than ever; the anchor is away with a roar. Some further chain is paid out; then a strange silence ensues; we are anchored in Ulva's Sound.

Come down into the cabin, then, you women-folk, and dry your streaming faces, and arrange your dishevelled hair. Is not this a wonderful stillness and silence after the whirl and roar of the storm outside? But then you must know that the waters are smooth in here; and the winds become gentle—as gentle as the name of the island that is close to us now in the dark. It is a green-shored island. The sailors call it *Ool-a-va*.

CHAPTER XXI.

CHASING SEALS.

NEXT morning found the Laird in a most excellent humour. All was going well. Though nothing had been said or promised by the Youth, was not his coming away with us into these remote solitudes—to say nothing of the very pleasant manner in which he sought to entertain Miss Mary Avon—sufficient evidence that he had at least no great repugnance to his uncle's scheme? The Laird was disposed to chuckle

privately over the anxiety that Mary displayed about her work. The poor young thing: she did not understand what higher powers were ordering her future for her.

"Let her work on," the Laird said, in great confidence, to his hostess, and there was a fine secret humour in his eyes. "Ay, ay, let her work on: hard work never harmed anybody. And if she brings her bit mailin to the marriage—ye would call it her dowry in the south—in the shape of a bundle of pictures—just as a young Scotch lass brings a chest of drawers or a set of napery—she will not be empty-handed. She can hang them up herself at Denny-mains."

"You are looking too far ahead, sir," says Queen T., with a quiet smile.

"Maybe—maybe," says the Laird, rubbing his hands with a certain proud satisfaction. "We'll see who's right—we will see who is right, ma'am."

Then, at breakfast, he was merry, complaisant, philosophical in turns. He told us that the last vidimus of the affairs of the Burgh of Strathgovan was most satisfactory: assets about 35,000*l.*; liabilities not over 20,000*l.*; there was thus an estimated surplus of no less than 15,000*l.* Why, then, he asked, should certain poor creatures on the Finance Committee make such a work about the merest trifles? Life was not given to man that he should worry himself into a rage about a penny farthing.

"There is a great dale of right down common sense, ma'am," said he. "in that verse that was written by my countryman, Welliam Dunbaur—

Be merry man, and tak not sair in mind
The wavering of this wretched world of sorrow;
To God be humble, to thy friend be kind,
And with thy neighbours gladly lend and borrow;
His chance to-night, it may be thine to-morrow;
Be blythe in heart for any aventure,
For oft with wise men it has been said aforow,
Without Gladnése availeth no Treasure."

But we, who were in the secret, knew that this quotation had nothing in the world to do with the Finance Committee of Strathgovan. The Laird had been comforting himself with these lines. They were a sort of philosophico-poetical justification of himself to himself for his readiness to make these two young people happy by giving up to them Denny-mains.

And no doubt he was still chuckling over the simplicity of this poor girl, when, after breakfast, he found her busily engaged in getting her painting materials on deck.

"Beautiful—beautiful," said he, glancing around. "Ye will make a fine picture out of those mountains, and the mist, and the still sea. What an extraordinary quiet after last night's rain!"

And perhaps he was thinking how well this picture would look in the dining-room at Denny-mains; and how a certain young hostess—no

longer pale and fragile, but robust and sun-browned with much driving in a pony-carriage—would take her friends to the picture, and show them Ulva, and Loch-na-Keal, and Ben-More; and tell them how this strange quiet and beauty had followed on a wild night of storm and rain. The world around us was at this moment so quiet that we could hear the twittering of some small bird among the rocks in there at the shore. And the pale, wan, dream-like sea was so perfect a mirror that an absolutely double picture was produced—of the gloomy mountain-masses of Ben-More, amid silver gleams of cloud and motionless wreaths of mist; of the basaltic pillars of the coast nearer at hand—a pale reddish-brown, with here and there a scant sprinkling of grass; of that broad belt of rich orange-yellow seaweed that ran all along the rocks, marking the junction of the world of the land with the water-world below. An absolutely perfect mirror; except when some fish splashed; then the small circles widened out and gradually disappeared; and the surface was as glassy as before.

The Laird was generous. He would leave the artist undisturbed at her work. Would not his nephew be better amused if a bachelor expedition were fitted out to go in search of the seals that abound in the channels around Inch Kenneth? Our hostess declined to go; but provided us with an ample lunch. The gig was lowered; and everything ready for the start.

"Bring your shot-gun, too, Howard," said the Laird. "I want ye to shoot some skarts. I am told that the breasts of them are very close and fine in the feathers; and I would like a muff or a bag made of them for a leddy—for a young leddy."

Mary Avon was busy with her work: how could she hear?

"And if the skin of the seals about here is not very fine, we will make something of it. Oh, ay, we will make something of it in the way of a present. I know a man in Glasgow who is extraordinary clever at such things."

"We have first to get the seal, uncle," said his nephew, laughing. "I know any number of men who assure you they have shot seals; but not quite so many who have got the seals that were shot."

"Oh, but we'll get the seal, and the skarts, too," said the Laird; and then he added, grimly, "Man, if ye cannot do that, what can ye do? If ye cannot shoot well, what else are ye fit for?"

"I really don't know, uncle," the Youth confessed modestly, as he handed down his rifle into the gig. "The London solicitors are a blind race. If they only knew what a treasure of learning and sound judgment they might have for the asking: but they don't. And I can't get any of the Scotch business you were talking about; because my name doesn't begin with Mac."

"Well, well, we must wait, and hope for the best," said the Laird cheerfully, as he took his seat in the stern of the gig. "We are not likely to run against a solicitor in the Sound of Ulva. Sufficient for the

day. As I was saying, there's great common sense in what Welliam Dunbaur wrote—

Be blythe in heart for any aventure,
For oft with wise men it has been said aforow,
Without Gladnése availeth no Treasure.

—Bless me, look at that ! ”

This sudden exclamation sent all eyes to the shore. A large heron, startled by the rattling of the oars, had risen, with a sharp and loud croak of alarm, from among the sea-weed, his legs hanging down, his long neck, and wings, and body apparently a grey-white against the shadow of the basaltic rocks. Then, lazily flapping, he rose higher and higher ; he tucked up his legs ; the great wings went somewhat more swiftly ; and then, getting above the low cliffs, and appearing quite black against the silver-clear sky, he slowly sailed away.

The silence of this dream-like picture around us was soon broken. As the men pulled away from the yacht, the lonely shores seemed to waken up into life ; and there were whistlings, and callings, and warnings all along the cliffs ; while the startled sea-birds whirled by in flashes of colour, or slowly and heavily betook themselves to some further promontory. And now, as we passed along the narrow Sound, and saw through the translucent water the wonder-land of seaweed below—with the patches of clear yellow sand intervening—we appreciated more and more highly the skill of John of Skye in getting us into such a harbour on the previous night. It is not everyone who, in pitch darkness and in the midst of squalls, can run a yacht into the neck of a bottle.

We emerged from the narrow channel, and got out into the open ; but even the broad waters of Loch-na-Keal were pale and still : the reflection of Eorsa was scarcely marred by a ripple. The long, measured throb of the rowing was the only sound of life in this world of still water and overhanging cloud. There was no stroke-oar now to give the chorus

*A long strong pull together,
Ho, ro, clansmen.*

But still we made good way. As we got further out, we came in sight of Colonsay ; and further off still, Staffa, lying like a dark cloud on the grey sea. Inch Kenneth, for which we were making, seemed almost black ; although, among the mists that lay along the Gribun and Bourg cliffs, there was a dull silver-yellow light, as though some sunlight had got mixed up with the clouds.

“ No, no,” the Laird was saying, as he studied a scrap of paper, “ it is not a great property to admeenister ; but I am strong in favour of local management. After reading that book on London, and its catalogue of the enormous properties there, our little bit Burgh appears to be only a toy ; but the principle of sound and energetic self-government is the same. And yet it is no so small, mind ye. The Burgh buildings are estimated at nineteen thousand pounds odd ; the furniture at twelve hundred pounds ; lamps near on two thousand five hundred ; sewers nine

thousand pounds odd; and then debts not far from three thousand pounds—that makes our assets just about thirty-five thousand. And if the water-pipes in some places are rather too small for the steam fire-engine, we maun have them bigger. It was quite rideeculous that a thriving place like Strathgovan, when there was a big fire, should have to run to Glesca for help. No, no; I believe in independence; and if ye should ever live in our neighbourhood, Howard, I hope ye will stand out against the policy of annexation. It is only a lot o' Radical bodies that are for upsetting institutions that have been tried by time and not found wanting."

"Oh, certainly, sir," Howard Smith said blithely. "When you educate people to take an interest in small parochial matters, they are better fitted to give an opinion about the general affairs of the country."

"Small?" said the Laird, eyeing him severely. "They are of as much importance as human life; is there anything of greater importance in the world? By abolishin' the Bigginsburn nuisance, and insisting on greater cleanliness and ventilation we have reduced the number of deaths from infectious diseases in a most extraordinar' manner; and there will be no more fear of accidents in the Mitherdrum Road, for we are going to have a conteenuous line of lamps that'll go right in to the Glesca lamps. I do not call these small matters. As for the asphaltin' of the pavement in front of John Anderson's line of houses," continued the Laird, as he consulted the memorandum in his hand, "that is a small matter, if ye like. I am not disposed to pronounce an opinion on that matter: they can settle it without my voice. But it will make a great difference to John Anderson; and I would like to see him come forward with a bigger subscription for the new Park. Well, well; we must fight through as best we can."

It was here suggested to the Laird that he should not let these weighty matters trouble him while he is away on a holiday.

"Trouble me!" said he, lightly. "Not a bit, man! People who have to meddle in public affairs must learn how to throw off their cares. I am not troubled. I am going to give the men a dram; for better pulling I never saw in a boat!"

He was as good as his word, too. He had the luncheon-basket handed down from the bow; he got out the whiskey bottle; there was a glass filled out for each of the men, which was drunk in solemn silence.

"Now, boys," said he, as they took to their oars again, "haven't ye got a song or a chorus to make the rowing easy?"

But they were too shy for a bit. Presently, however, we heard at the bow a low, plaintive, querulous voice; and the very oars seemed to recognise the air as they gripped the water. Then there was a hum of a chorus—not very musical—and it was in the Gaelic—but we knew what the refrain meant.

*Ō bōatmān, ā fārowēll tō yōu,
Ō bōatmān, ā fārowēll tō yōu,
Whērēvēr yōu māy bē gōing.*

That is something like the English of it: we had heard the *Fhir a Bhata* in other days.

The long, heavy pull is nearly over. Here are the low-lying reefs of rock outside Inch Kenneth; not a whisper is permissible as we creep into the nearest bay. And then the men and the boat are left there; and the Youth—perhaps dimly conscious that his uncle means the seal-skin for Mary Avon—grasps his rifle and steals away over the undulating shelves of rock; while his two companions, with more leisure but with not less circumspection, follow to observe his operations. Fortunately there is no screaming sea-pyot or whistling curlew to give warning; stealthily, almost bent in two, occasionally crawling on all fours, he makes his way along the crannies in the reef, until, as we see, he must be pearly approaching the channel on his left. There he pauses to take breath. He creeps behind a rock; and cautiously looks over. He continues his progress.

"This is terrible woark," says the Laird, in a stage-whisper, as he, too—with a much heavier bulk to carry—worms along. From time to time he has to stay to apply his handkerchief to his forehead; it is hot work on this still, breathless day.

And at last we, too, get down to the edge of a channel—some hundred yards lower than Howard Smith's post—and from behind a rock we have a pretty clear view of the scene of operations. Apparently there is no sign of any living thing—except that a big fish leapt into the air, some dozen yards off. Thereafter a dead silence.

After waiting about a quarter of an hour or so, the Laird seemed to become violently excited, though he would neither budge nor speak. And there, between two islands right opposite young Smith, appeared two shining black heads on the still water; and they were evidently coming down this very channel. On they came—turning about one way and another, as if to look that the coast was clear. Every moment we expected to hear the crack of the rifle. Then the heads silently disappeared.

The Laird was beside himself with disappointment.

"Why did he no shoot? Why did he no shoot?" he said, in an excited whisper.

He had scarcely spoken when he was startled by an apparition. Right opposite to him—not more than twenty yards off—a black thing appeared on the water—with a glistening smooth head, and large, soft eyes. Then another. We dared not move. We waited for the whistle of the rifle-bullet. The next instant the first seal caught sight of the Laird; raised its head for an instant at least six inches higher; then silently plunged along with its companion. They were gone, at all events.

The Youth came marching along the rocks, his rifle over his shoulder.

"Why didn't you fire?" his uncle said, almost angrily.

"I thought they were coming nearer," said he. "I was just about

to fire when they dived. Mind, it isn't very easy to get on to a thing that is bobbing about like that, with a rifle. I propose we have luncheon, now, until the tide ebbs a bit; then there may be a chance of catching one lying on the rocks. That is the proper time for getting a shot at a seal."

We had luncheon: there was no difficulty about securing that. But as for getting at the seals—whether we crawled over the rocks, or lay in hiding, or allowed the boat to drift towards some island, on the chance of one of them rising in our neighbourhood—it was no use at all. There were plenty of seals about: a snap shot now and again served to break the monotony of the day; but that present for Mary Avon seemed as remote as ever. And when one is determined on shooting a seal, one is not likely to waste one's attention, and cartridges, on such inferior animals as skarts.

The silver-grey day became more golden; there was a touch of warm purple about the shadows of Staffa.

"Come," said the Laird at last. "We must go back. It is no use. I have often heard people say that if you miss the first chance at a seal it never gives ye another."

"Better luck next time, uncle," said the Youth; but his uncle refused to be comforted.

And the first thing he said to Mary Avon when he got back to the yacht was—

"We have not got it."

"Got what?" said she.

"The seal-skin I wanted to have dressed for ye. No, nor the skarts I wanted to have made into a muff or a bag for ye."

"Oh," said she, promptly, "I am very glad. I hope you won't shoot any of those poor things on my account; I should be very sorry indeed."

The Laird took this as one of the familiar protestations on the part of women, who wouldn't for the world have poor things shot, but who don't object to wearing any amount of furs and feathers, to say nothing of having innocent sheep sheared and harmless silk-worms robbed in order to deck themselves out. She should have that dressed seal-skin, and that muff of skarts' breasts, all the same.

Nothing of stupendous importance happened that evening except that—after we had caught three dozen of good-sized lithe and returned to the yacht with this welcome addition to our stores—there was a general discussion of our plans for the next few days. And our gentle hostess was obviously looking forward to Angus Sutherland's coming back to us with great pleasure; and we were to make our return to suit his convenience; and she would write to him whenever we got near a post-office again.

Mary Avon had sate silent during all this. At last, she said—apparently with some effort and yet very deliberately—

"I—I think you are a little cruel to Dr. Sutherland. You are

forcing him to come with you against his better judgment—for you know, with his prospects, and the calls on his time, he cannot afford such long idleness. Do you think it is quite fair?"

The woman stared at this girl, who spoke with some earnestness, though her eyes were downcast.

"He would do anything to please you," Mary Avon continued, as if she were determined to get through with some speech that she had prepared, "and he is very fond of sailing: but do you think you should allow him to injure his prospects in this way? Wouldn't it be a greater kindness to write and say that, if he really feels he ought to return to London, you would not hold him to his promise? I am sure he would not be offended: he would understand you at once. And I am sure he would do what is clearly right: he would go straight back to London, and resume his work—for his own sake and for the sake of those who count on a great future for him. I, for one, should be very sorry to see him come back to idle away his time in sailing."

And still Queen Tita stared at the girl, though their eyes did not meet. And she could scarcely believe that it was Mary Avon who had counselled this cold dismissal.

CHAPTER XXII.

"UNCERTAIN, COY, AND HARD TO PLEASE."

THERE are two people walking up and down the deck this beautiful morning: the lazy ones are still below, dawdling over breakfast. And now young Smith, though he is not much more than an acquaintance, talks quite confidentially to his hostess. She has his secret; he looks to her for aid. And when they do have a quiet moment like this together there is usually but one person of whom they speak.

"I must say she has an extraordinary spirit," he observes, with some decision. "Why, I believe she is rather pleased than otherwise to have lost that money. She is not a bit afraid of going up to London to support herself by her work. It seems to amuse her on the whole!"

"Mary has plenty of courage," says the other quietly.

"I don't wonder at my uncle being so fond of her: he likes her independent ways and her good humour. I shouldn't be surprised if he were to adopt her as his daughter, and cut me out. There would be some sense in that."

"I am glad you take it so coolly," says our governor-general, in a matter-of-fact way that rather startles him. "More unlikely things have happened."

But he recovers himself directly.

"No, no," says he, laughing. "There is one objection. She could not sit on any of the parochial Boards of Strathgovan. Now I know my uncle looks forward to putting me on the Police Committee and the

Lighting Committee and no end of other Committees. By the way, she might go on the School Board. Do they have women on the School Boards in Scotland?"

On this point his hostess was no better informed than himself.

"Well," said he, after a bit, "I wouldn't call her pretty, you know; but she has a singularly interesting face."

"Oh, do you think so?" says the other, quite innocently.

"I do, indeed," answers the ingenuous youth. "And the more you see of her the more interesting it becomes. You seem to get so well acquainted with her somehow; and—and you have a sort of feeling that her presence is sort of necessary."

This was somewhat vague; but he made another wild effort to express himself.

"What I mean is—that—that suppose she were to leave the yacht, wouldn't the saloon look quite different? And wouldn't the sailing be quite different? You would know there was something wanting."

"I should, indeed," is the emphatic reply.

"I never knew anyone," says the Youth, warming to his work of thorough explanation, "about whose presence you seem so conscious—even when she isn't here—I don't mean that exactly—I mean that at this moment now, you know she is on board the yacht—and it would be quite different if she were not. I suppose most people wouldn't call her pretty. There is nothing of the Book of Beauty about her. But I call it a most interesting face. And she has fine eyes. Anybody must admit that. They have a beautiful, soft expression; and they can laugh even when she is quite silent——"

"My dear Mr. Smith," says his hostess, suddenly stopping short, and with a kind of serious smile on her face, "let me talk frankly to you. You acted very sensibly, I think, in coming with us to humour your uncle. He will come to see that this scheme of his is impracticable; and in the meantime, if you don't mind the discomfort of it, you have a holiday. That is all quite well. But pray don't think it necessary that you should argue yourself into falling in love with Mary. I am not in her confidence on such a delicate matter; but one has eyes; and I think I might almost safely say to you that, even if you persuaded yourself that Mary would make an excellent wife—and be presentable to your friends—I say even if you succeeded in persuading yourself I am afraid you would only have thrown that labour away. Please don't try to convince yourself that you ought to fall in love with her."

This was plain speaking. But then our admiral-in-chief was very quickly sensitive where Mary Avon was concerned; and perhaps she did not quite like her friend being spoken of as though she were a pill that had to be swallowed. Of course the Youth instantly disclaimed any intention of that kind. He had a very sincere regard for the girl, so far as he had seen her; he was not persuading himself; he was only saying how much she improved when you got better acquainted with her.

"And if," said he, with just a touch of dignity, "if Miss Avon is—
is—engaged——"

"Oh, I did not say that," his hostess quickly interposed. "Oh, certainly not. It was only a guess on my part——"

"—— or likely to be engaged," he continued, with something of the same reserve, "I am sure I am very glad for her sake; and whoever marries her ought to have a cheerful home and a pleasant companion."

This was a generous sentiment; but there was not much of a "wish-you-may-be-happy" air about the young man. Moreover, where was the relief he ought to have experienced on hearing that there was an obstacle—or likelihood of an obstacle—to the execution of his uncle's scheme which would absolve him from responsibility altogether?

However, the subject could not be continued just then; for at this moment a tightly-brushed small head, and a narrow-brimmed felt hat, and a shapely neck surrounded by an upstanding collar and bit of ribbon of navy-blue, appeared at the top of the companion, and Mary Avon, looking up with her black eyes full of a cheerful friendliness, said—

"Well, John, are you ready to start yet?"

And the great, brown-bearded John of Skye, looking down at this small Jack-in-the-box with a smile of welcome on his face, said—

"Oh, yes, mem, when the breakfast is over."

"Do you think it is blowing outside, then?"

"Oh, no, mem, but there is a good breeze; and maybe there will be a bit of a rowl from the Atlantic. Will Mr. —— himself be for going now?"

"Oh, yes, certainly," she says, with a fine assumption of authority. "We are quite ready when you are ready, John; Fred will have the things off the table in a couple of minutes."

"Very well, mem," says the obedient John of Skye, going forward to get the men up to the windlass.

Our young Doctor should have been there to see us getting under way. The Sound of Ulva is an excellent harbour and anchorage when you are once in it; but getting out of it, unless with both wind and tide in your favour, is very like trying to manœuvre a man-of-war in a tea-cup. But we had long ago come to the conclusion that John of Skye could sail the *White Dove* through a gas-pipe, with half a gale dead in his teeth; and the manner in which he got us out of this narrow and tortuous channel fully justified our confidence.

"Very prettily done, Captain John!" said the Laird—who was beginning to give himself airs on nautical matters—when we had got out into the open.

And here, as we soon discovered, was the brisk fresh breeze that John of Skye had predicted; and the running swell, too, that came sweeping in to the mouth of Loch-na-Keal. Black indeed looked that far-reaching loch on this breezy, changeful morning—as dark as it was when the chief of Ulva's Isle came down to the shore with his runaway bride; and all

along Ben-More and over the Gribun cliffs hung heavy masses of cloud, dark and threatening as if with thunder. But far away in the south there was a more cheerful outlook; the windy sea shimmering in light; some gleams of blue in the sky: we knew that the sunshine must be shining on the green clover and beautiful sands of Iona. The *White Dove* seemed to understand what was required of her. Her head was set for the gleaming south; her white wings outspread; as she sprang to meet those rushing seas we knew we were escaping from the thunder-darkness that lay over Loch-na-Keal.

And Ulva: had we known that we were now leaving Ulva behind us for the last time, should we not have taken another look back, even though it now lay under a strange and mysterious gloom? Perhaps not. We had grown to love the island in other days. And when one shuts one's eyes in winter, it is not to see an Ulva of desolate rocks and leaden waves; it is a fair and shining Ulva, with blue seas breaking whitely along its shores; and magical still channels, with mermaid's halls of seaweed; and an abundant, interesting life—all manner of sea-birds, black rabbits running among the rocks, seals swimming in the silent bays. Then the patch of civilisation under shelter of the hills; the yellow corn-fields; the dots of human creatures and the red and tawny-grey cattle visible afar in the meadow; the solitary house; the soft foliage of trees and bushes; the wild flowers along the cliffs. That is the green-shored island: that is the *Ool-a-va* of the sailors; we know it only in sunlight and among blue summer seas: it shines for us for ever!

The people who go yachting are a fickle folk. The scene changes—and their interests change—every few minutes. Now it is the swooping down of a solan; again it is the appearance of another island far away; presently it is a shout of laughter forward, as some unlucky wight gets drowned in a shower of sea-spray: anything catches their attention for the moment. And so the *White Dove* swings along; and the sea gets heavier and heavier; and we watch the breakers springing high over the black rocks of Colonsay. It is the Laird who is now instructing our new guest; pointing out to him, as they come in view, Staffa, the Dutchman, Fladda, and Lunga, and Cairnaburg. Tiree is invisible at the horizon: there is too wild a whirl of wind and water.

The gloom behind us increases; we know not what is about to happen to our beloved but now distant Ulva—what sudden rumble of thunder is about to startle the silence of the dark Loch-na-Keal. But ahead of us the south is still shining clear: blow, winds, that we may gain the quiet shelter of Polterriv before the evening falls! And is it not full moon to-night?—to-night our new guest may see the yellow moon shining on the still waters of Iona Sound.

But the humiliating truth must be told. The heavy sea has been trying to one unaccustomed to life on board. Howard Smith, though answering questions well enough, and even joining voluntarily in conversation occasionally, wears a preoccupied air. He does not take

much interest in the caves of Bourg. The bright look has gone from his face.

His gentle hostess—who has herself had moments of gloom on the bosom of the deep—recognises these signs instantly; and insists on immediate luncheon. There is a double reason for this haste. We can now run under the lee of the Erisgeir rocks, where there will be less danger to Master Fred's plates and tumblers. So we are all bundled down into the saloon; the swell sensibly subsides as we get to leeward of Erisgeir; there is a scramble of helping and handing; and another explosion in the galley tells us that Master Fred has not yet mastered the art of releasing effervescing fluids. Half a tumblerful of that liquid puts new life into our solemn friend. The colour returns to his face, and brightness to his eyes. He admits that he was beginning to long for a few minutes on firm land—but now—but now—he is even willing to join us in an excursion that has been talked of to the far Dubhartach lighthouse.

"But we must really wait for Angus," our hostess says, "before going out there. He was always so anxious to go to Dubhartach."

"But surely you won't ask him to come away from his duties again?" Mary Avon puts in hastily. "You know he ought to go back to London at once."

"I know I have written him a letter," says the other demurely. "You can read it if you like, Mary. It is in pencil, for I was afraid of the ink-bottle going waltzing over the table."

Miss Avon would not read the letter. She said we must be past Erisgeir by this time; and proposed we should go on deck. This we did; and the Youth was now so comfortable and assured in his mind that, by lying full length on the deck, close to the weather bulwarks, he managed to light a cigar. He smoked there in much content, almost safe from the spray.

Mary Avon was seated at the top of the companion, reading. Her hostess came and squeezed herself in beside her, and put her arm round her.

"Mary," said she, "why don't you want Angus Sutherland to come back to the yacht?"

"I!" said she, in great surprise—though she did not meet the look of the elder woman—"I—I—don't you see yourself that he ought to go back to London? How can he look after that magazine while he is away in the Highlands? And—and—he has so much to look forward to—so much to do—that you should not encourage him in making light of his work——"

"Making light of his work!" said the other. "I am almost sure that you yourself told him that he deserved and required a long—a very long—holiday."

"You did, certainly."

"And didn't you?"

The young lady looked rather embarrassed.

"When you saw him," said she, with flushed cheeks, "so greatly enjoying the sailing—absorbed in it—and—and gaining health and strength, too—well, of course you naturally wished that he should come back and go away with you again. But it is different on reflection. You should not ask him."

"Why, what evil is likely to happen to him through taking another six weeks' holiday? Is he likely to fall out of the race of life because of a sail in the *White Dove*? And doesn't he know his own business? He is not a child."

"He would do a great deal to please you."

"I want him to please himself," said the other; and she added, with a deadly frown gathering on her forehead, "and I won't have you, Miss Dignity, interfering with the pleasures of my guests. And there is to be no snubbing, and no grim looks, and no hints about work, and London, and other nonsense, when Angus Sutherland comes back to us. You shall stand by the gangway—do you hear?—and receive him with a smiling face; and if you are not particularly kind, and civil, and attentive to him, I'll have you lashed to the yard-arm and painted blue—keel-haul me if I don't."

Fairer and fairer grew the scene around us as the brave *White Dove* went breasting the heavy Atlantic rollers. Blue and white overhead; the hot sunlight doing its best to dry the dripping rocks; Iona shining there over the smoother waters of the Sound; the sea breaking white, and spouting up in columns, as it dashed against the pale red promontories of the Ross of Mull. But then this stiff breeze had backed to the west; and there was many a long tack to be got over before we got quit of the Atlantic swell and ran clear into the Sound. The evening was drawing on apace as we slowly and cautiously steered into the little creek of Polterriv. No sooner had the anchor rattled out than we heard the clear tinkling of Master Fred's bell; how on earth had he managed to cook dinner amid all that diving and rolling and pitching?

And then, as we had hoped, it was a beautiful evening; and the long gig was got out, and shawls for the women-folk flung into the stern. The fishing did not claim our attention. Familiar as some of us were with the wonderful twilights of the north, which of us had ever seen anything more solemn, and still, and lovely than these colours of sea and shore? Half-past nine at night on the 8th of August; and still the west and north were flushed with a pale rose-red, behind the dark, rich, olive-green of the shadowed Iona. But what was that to the magic world that lay before us as we returned to the yacht? Now the moon had arisen, and it seemed to be of a clear, lambent gold; and the cloudless heavens and the still sea were of a violet hue—not imaginatively, or relatively, but positively and literally violet. Then between the violet-coloured sky and the violet-coloured sea, a long line of rock, jet black as it appeared to us. That was all the picture: the yellow moon, the violet sky, the violet sea, the line of black rock. No doubt it was the intensity of the shadows

along this line of rock that gave that extraordinary luminousness to the still heavens and the still sea.

When we got back to the yacht a telegram awaited us. It had been sent to Bunessan, the nearest telegraph-station; but some kind friends there, recognising the *White Dove* as she came along by Erisgeir, and shrewdly concluding that we must pass the night at Polterriv, had been so kind as to forward it on to Fion-phort by a messenger.

"I thought so!" says Queen T. with a fine delight in her face as she reads the telegram. "It is from Angus. He is coming on Thursday. We must go back to meet him at Ballahulish or Corpach."

Then the discourtesy of this remark struck her.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Smith," said she, instantly. "Of course, I mean if it is quite agreeable to you. He does not expect us, you see; he would come on here——"

"I assure you I would as soon go to Ballahulish as anywhere else," says the Youth promptly. "It is quite the same to me—it is all new, you see, and all equally charming."

Mary Avon alone expressed no delight at this prospect of our going to Ballahulish to meet Angus Sutherland; she sate silent; her eyes were thoughtful and distant; it was not of anything around her that she was thinking.

The moon had got whiter now; the sea and the sky blue-black in place of that soft warm violet colour. We sate on deck till a late hour; the world was asleep around us; not a sound disturbed the absolute stillness of land and sea.

And where was the voice of our singing bird? Had the loss of a mere sum of money made her forget all about Mary Beaton, and Mary Seaton, "and Mary Carmichael and me"? Or was the midnight silence too much for her; and the thought of the dusky cathedral over there; with the grave-stones pale in the moonlight; and all around a whispering of the lonely sea? She had nothing to fear. She might have crossed over to Iona and might have walked all by herself through the ruins, and in calmness regarded the sculptured stones. The dead sleep sound.

What the English have done for the Indian People.

IN TWO CHAPTERS.

I.

BRITISH rule in India is again upon its trial. On the one hand, the English nation finds itself called to enter on new responsibilities, and to embark on unknown dangers. On the other hand, doubters have arisen who dispute whether our supremacy in the East is a gain either to ourselves or to the people over whom we rule. The question as to the benefit of our Indian connection to ourselves is a rhetorical rather than a serious one. For with the downfall of British rule in India would disappear that security of person and property which forms the first essential for our vast commerce with the East. I, for one, am not afraid of the cry of "Perish India," when I remember that that cry means "Perish our greatest customer among all the British possessions; perish the chief consumer of Manchester goods; perish 55 millions sterling of British trade per annum." What we have reason to fear is not the cry of "Perish India," but the cry of "Perish the responsibilities entailed upon us by our rule in India."

If, however, as some have recently alleged, that rule has failed to benefit the Indian races, then I can sympathise with those who question whether we should continue to accept or to extend the responsibilities which Indian rule involves. For no government has a right to exist which does not exist in the interests of the governed. The test of British rule in India is, not what it has done for ourselves, but what it has done for the Indian people. By this test our work in the East must stand or fall. If our attempt to administer that vast and distant empire has turned out a failure, if its people are not more free, more secure, and more prosperous under British rule than they were under their native dynasties, then the wise course for Great Britain would seem to be to curtail her former responsibilities, to accept no new ones, and to withdraw as far as may be from an undertaking to which she had proved unequal.

If, on the other hand, we find that our countrymen have not failed in their splendid and difficult task; if we find that British rule in India means order in place of anarchy, protection in place of oppression, government by the law in place of misgovernment by the sword, and a vast free people dwelling in safety where of old each man was beaten down beneath whosoever was stronger than himself; then I think that Great Britain may with a firm heart continue to accept the great responsibility which has fallen to it, and that it may calmly face the duties which that responsibility involves.

22 WHAT THE ENGLISH HAVE DONE FOR THE INDIAN PEOPLE.

During the last ten years it has been my business to visit, almost every winter, the twelve provinces of India, and to superintend a survey of their population and resources. The Indian Government has, so to speak, ordered me to conduct for it a great stock-taking after a century of British rule. I have often amused myself, during my solitary peregrinations, by imagining what a Hindu of the last century would think of the present state of his country, if he could revisit the earth. I have supposed that his first surprise at the outward physical changes had subsided ; that he had got accustomed to the fact that thousands of square miles of jungle, which in his time were inhabited only by wild beasts, have been turned into fertile crop-lands ; that fever-smitten swamps have been covered with healthy well-drained cities ; that the mountain walls which shut off the interior of India from the seaports have been pierced by roads and scaled by railways ; that the great rivers which formed the barriers between provinces, and desolated the country with their floods, have now been controlled to the uses of man, spanned by bridges, and tapped by canals. But what would strike him as more surprising than these outward changes is the security of the people. In provinces where every man, from the prince to the peasant, a hundred years ago, went armed, he would look round in vain for a matchlock or a sword. He would find the multitudinous native states of India, which he remembered in jealous isolation, broken only by merciless wars, now trading quietly with each other, bound together by railways and roads, by the post and the telegraph. He would find, moreover, much that was new as well as much that was changed. He would see the country dotted with imposing edifices in a strange foreign architecture, of which he could not guess the uses. He would ask what wealthy prince had reared for himself that spacious palace ? He would be answered that the building was no pleasure-house for the rich, but a hospital for the poor. He would enquire, in honour of what new deity is this splendid shrine ? He would be told that it was no new temple to the gods, but a school for the people. Instead of bristling fortresses he would see courts of justice ; in place of a Muhammadan general in charge of each district, he would find an English magistrate ; instead of a swarming soldiery, he would discover a police.

I shall endeavour to present a few scenes of the panorama which would thus pass before his eyes. I shall not venture to trouble the reader with statistics of any complicated sort. The statistics of British India form indeed a record of progress of which every Englishman may well feel proud. They read like the day-dream of a philanthropist rather than like a sober narrative of administration. They show what can be accomplished by good government among long-depressed Asiatic races—by a government not always well instructed, and sometimes very fallible, but by a government honest in its aims, and penetrated by a great desire to do its duty by the people. But while the contrast between the past and the present is full of encouragement, it is also full of warning. The old difficulties arise afresh ; the old problems

have to be solved in new forms. Internal disturbances, which a hundred years ago were chronic in every part of India, still occur at rarer intervals. At this moment Great Britain is called upon to deal with a difficult frontier question; in the last century every frontier of India was in desolation or in flames. Twice during the past ten years has British charity flowed forth on a magnificent scale to relieve Indian distress. But the word famine, though still heard, has lost its old significance. It has ceased to mean ten millions of human beings swept away by starvation in a single summer; it no longer leaves a third of the country empty of cultivators, to relapse into jungle, and to be tenanted for the next twenty years only by wild beasts. Much has been accomplished, but much remains to be done; and it is in no vainglorious spirit that we contrast what has been with what is. In thinking of her work in India, Great Britain may proudly look back, but she must also look anxiously forward. If I now dwell exclusively on what England has accomplished in India, it is only that I may clear the way for stating with the greater emphasis, and at no distant date, "What England has yet to do for the Indian People."

Indian frontier affairs have lately occupied much attention, and we shall commence our sketch by a glance at the frontiers of India in the last century. India is a great three-cornered country, stretching southward from Asia into the sea. Its northern base rests upon the Himalayan ranges; the chief part of its western side is washed by the Indian Ocean, and of its eastern by the Bay of Bengal. But while thus guarded along the whole length of its boundaries by nature's defences, the mountains and the sea, it has, at its north-eastern and north-western corners, two opposite sets of gateways which connect it with the rest of Asia. Through these gateways successive hordes of invaders have poured into India, and in the last century the process was still going on. Each set of new comers plundered and massacred without mercy and without restraint. During 700 years, the warring races of Central Asia and Afghanistan filled up their measure of bloodshed and pillage to the full. Sometimes they returned with their spoil to their mountains, leaving desolation behind; sometimes they killed off or drove out the former inhabitants, and settled down in India as lords of the soil; sometimes they founded imperial dynasties, destined to be crushed, each in its turn, by a new host swarming into India through the Afghan passes. In the middle of the last century six such invasions on a great scale took place in twenty-three years. The first was led by a soldier of fortune from Persia who slaughtered Afghan and Indian alike; the last five were regular Afghan invasions.

The precise meaning of the word "invasion" in India during the last century may be gathered from the following facts. It signified not merely a host of twenty to a hundred thousand barbarians on the march, paying for nothing, and eating up every hamlet, and cottage, and farm-yard; burning and slaughtering on the slightest provocation, and often

in mere sport. It usually also meant a grand final sack and massacre at the capital of the invaded country. Here is the account of the fate of Delhi in the first of the six invasions in the middle of the last century—an account drawn up by the least rhetorical and most philosophical of Indian historians, the father of John Stuart Mill. Delhi had peacefully opened its gates to the strangers, but a brawl had afterwards arisen between the troops and the citizens. "With the first light of the morning," says Mill, "the invading leader, Nadir, issued forth, and, dispersing bands of soldiers in every direction, ordered them to slaughter the inhabitants, without regard to age or sex, in every street or avenue in which the body of a murdered Persian should be found. From sunrise to midday the sabre raged; and by that time not less than 8,000 were numbered with the dead. During the massacre and pillage the city was set on fire in several places." At the end of a fifty-eight days' sack, the plunderers went off with a booty valued at nine millions sterling.

On this first of the six invasions, then, 8,000 men, women, and children were hacked to pieces in one forenoon in the streets of the capital. But the Persian general knew how to stop the massacre at his pleasure. The Afghan leaders had less authority, and their five great invasions during the thirteen middle years of the last century form one of the most appalling tales of bloodshed and wanton cruelty ever inflicted on the human race. In one of these invasions, the miserable capital, Delhi, had opened her gates and received the Afghans as guests. Yet for several weeks, not merely for six hours on this occasion, the citizens were exposed to every foul enormity which a barbarian army could practise on a prostrate foe. Meanwhile the Afghan cavalry were scouring the country, slaying, burning, and mutilating in the meanest hamlet as in the greatest town. They took especial delight in sacking the holy places of the Hindus, and murdering the defenceless votaries at the shrines. For example, one gang of 25,000 Afghan horsemen swooped down upon the sacred city of Muttra during a festival, while it was thronged with peaceful Hindu pilgrims engaged in their devotions. "They burned the houses," says the Tyrolese Jesuit Tieffenthaler, who was in India at that time, "together with their inmates, massacring others with the sword and the lance; hauling off into captivity maidens and youths, men and women. In the temples they slaughtered cows," the sacred animal of the Hindus, "and smeared the images and pavement with the blood."

It is needless to quote further from the tale of Afghan atrocities in the last century. They went on year after year, the Afghans being too loosely organised to serve as a barrier against the hosts from Central Asia, and always ready for an Indian invasion on their own account. The borderland between Afghanistan and India lay silent and waste; indeed districts far within the frontier, which had once been thickly peopled and are now again thickly peopled, were swept bare of inhabitants. Thus Gujranwala District, which contained the ancient capital of the Panjáb in Buddhist times, was utterly depopulated. Its present

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inhabitants are all immigrants of comparatively recent date, and before their advent the whole region seems to have been abandoned. The district, which was thus stripped of its inhabitants in the last century, has now a new population of over half a million souls.

The Afghan question survives to this day, but I think you will agree with me that its present form, although by no means easy of solution, is preferable to the shape in which it presented itself in the last century. That question has now passed beyond the range of purely Indian politics, and must be decided by the deliberate voice of the British Parliament. In India we are neither Whigs nor Tories. We are simply a body of administrators doing our best to govern an Asiatic country without reference to European politics, and in the interests of the people themselves. The task in its present dimensions is a sufficiently vast one. So far as I may speak for Indian officials, and I have spent the last eighteen years of my life among them, I should say that Indian administrators neither desire annexation, nor do they shrink from the responsibilities which annexation, when necessary, involves. It is for the British nation, not for their Indian servants, to settle the future of Afghanistan. But if England resolve that Afghanistan is to cease to be a turbulent neighbour, and that she is to become henceforth a well-ordered part of the Indian Empire, then the past history of that Empire shows that there will be no permanent difficulty in giving effect to your decision. We have taught more unruly, more numerous, and far better organised races than the Afghans the lesson of settling down into peaceful industry. I do not underrate the difficulties. The lesson is not to be taught in a single year, and both the teachers and the learners may make some very serious mistakes at first. But the task of dealing with Afghanistan is one of less magnitude than the task of dealing with the Panjáb was thirty years ago. Kabul formed at one time as integral a part of the Delhi Empire as the Panjáb now forms a part of British India; and the mountain passes are a much more simple problem for the military engineers of 1879 than the Panjáb rivers were for their predecessors in 1848. At this moment it would be an easier task to form a railway route into Afghanistan than to complete the section of the Panjáb Railway across the Indus from Lahore to Peshawur. As a matter of fact, I believe that trains will be running into Afghanistan before through communication is established from Peshawur to Calcutta. If Great Britain decides that a similar course is to be adopted in Afghanistan as was adopted in the Panjáb, the same results will follow. Indian soldiers have again proved that they know how to conquer, and Indian administrators will again show that they know how to govern. The mass of the Afghan people, no longer ground down by the military clans, will find that a new era of prosperity and security has begun; while, before ten years are over, the military clans of Afghanistan will pride themselves, as our late enemies the Gurkhas and the Sikhs now pride themselves, on supplying the best disciplined and most loyal regiments to our Indian army. British babies will be

wheeled about in perambulators in cities in which no European has hitherto dared to show his face; and another frontier people will have been added to the list of wild races who have turned their spears into pruning hooks under English rule.

So much for the north-western border, which is still a source of discomfort to us; but in the last century invasions and inroads were yearly events along the whole frontier of India. The Himalayan mountains, instead of serving as a northern wall to shut out aggressors, formed a line of fastnesses from which the hill races poured down upon the plains. For fifteen hundred miles along their foot stretched a thick belt of territory which no one dared to cultivate. This silent border-land varied from twenty to fifty miles in breadth, and embraced a total area of 30,000 square miles, which yielded no food for man, but teemed with wild beasts who nightly sallied forth to ravage the herds and hamlets in the open country beyond. Such a border-land seemed to the miserable villagers on the plains to be the best possible frontier; for its dense jungles served as some sort of barrier against the invasions of the wild Himalayan races, and it bred deadly fevers which made havoc of armies that attempted a passage through it. Indeed, the ancient Hindu laws of Manu, written more than 2,000 years ago, ordained, as a protection to a royal city or kingdom, a belt of wilderness twenty miles around it in place of fortifications; and the peasantry of Northern India were thankful in the last century for the tract of disease-laden jungle which, to a certain extent, defended them from the savage hillmen beyond.

Such was the state of the north-western and the long northern boundary of India before the establishment of British rule. A glance at the north-eastern border discloses a still more painful picture. The history of the fertile valley of Assam, in the north-eastern corner of India, is one long narrative of invasion and extermination. Anciently the seat of a powerful Hindu kingdom, whose ruined forts of massive hewn stone we find buried in the jungle, Assam was devastated, like the rest of Bengal, by fanatical Muhammadan invaders in the fifteenth century from the west. A fierce aboriginal race (the Koch) next swooped down on it from the north. They in turn were crushed by another aboriginal race (the Ahoms) from the east; and these again were being exterminated by the Burmese from the south, when they implored the English to interfere. During the last century large tracts of Assam were depopulated, and throughout that province and Eastern Bengal more than 30,000 square miles of fertile frontier districts lay waste. In addition to these systematic invasions the smaller hill tribes every autumn rushed down upon the miserable hamlets which were left, and drove away the women and the cattle.

The great mountain wall round Northern India failed therefore, till the British came upon the scene, to afford any security to the Indian races. The sea, which forms the natural defence of the rest of the country, was in like manner only a source of new dangers. On the Bay of

Bengal, the pirates from the Burmese coast sailed up the great rivers, burning the villages, massacring or carrying off into slavery the inhabitants. The first English surveyor, in the second half of the last century, entered on his maps a fertile and now populous tract on the seaboard, as bare of villages, with the significant words written across it, "depopulated by the Mughas," or sea-robbers. A fleet was ineffectually maintained by the Muhammadan Government to keep open the river-channels, and a heavy impost, whose name survives to the present day, although the tax itself has long been abolished, was in vain levied for this service. On the other side of the peninsula, in the Indian Ocean, piracy was conducted on a grander scale. Wealthy rājās kept up luxurious courts upon the extortions which their pirate fleets levied from trading vessels, and from the villages along the coast. The truth is, that the natural defences of India, the mountains and the sea, were in the last century equally powerless to protect the Indian races.

This state of things could not be permitted under British rule, and the first business of the English was to secure India from foreign invasions. The sea-robbers were effectively dealt with. One of Clive's achievements was rooting out the pirate nests of the south-western coast; and the Indian navy, after sweeping the robber hordes from the sea, and rendering Indian waters as safe as the English Channel, finished its work nineteen years ago, and was abolished in 1861.

The unruly tribes of the Himalayan frontiers had always their hill fastnesses to retreat to. Their subjugation took a longer time, and is less complete, as our troubles with Afghanistan attest. But by persuasion, and, when necessary, by chastisement, we have taught the wild races along the whole northern and north-eastern frontier, for a distance of 1,500 miles, the lesson that they must please keep quiet, and betake themselves to some other livelihood than the pillage of the husbandmen on the plains. Most of them have been apt scholars. The great kingdom of Nepal on the north, which forced us to correct its inveterate practice of raiding by two campaigns, followed by partial annexation, has, for the last sixty years, been our firm ally, and hurried out its armies to our help in the Mutiny of 1857. At one time during this long interval, the dynastic intrigues, always fermenting in a native court, threatened to bring the Nepalese into conflict with the British; and on that occasion the whole kingdom of Nepal was kept loyal to its treaties, through a prolonged crisis, by the firmness and skill of a single Englishman, Brian Hodgson. Other native states, like the principality of Kuch Behar, at once settled down into peaceful industry. Its first and only treaty with us, dated 1773, remains unbroken by either party to this day, a monument of mutual good faith.

A firm frontier being established, the peasantry spread themselves out upon the fertile depopulated lands. The task of reclaiming these tracts has been a heavy one. In some parts, as in the now populous district of Goalpara with its half-million of inhabitants, more money was

spent, until twenty-five years ago, by Government in rewards for killing the wild beasts than the whole sum realised from the land-revenue. The broad belt of waste land along the frontier was almost the only unoccupied territory which the British Government could grant to European settlers. The first British capitalists had to do battle alike with the banditti and the wild beasts. We read in the manuscript records of 1788 of a Mr. Raush, one of the earliest English merchants in Assam, who made an alliance on his own account with the local Rájá, and sent a private regiment of 700 men to the aid of that prince. While the natives of India have pushed their rice cultivation towards the foot of the mountains, English capitalists have dotted their slopes with tea-plantations. Not less than 13,000 square miles of border-districts have been reclaimed, and yield each year sixteen millions sterling worth of produce. The tea-gardens alone exported last year three millions sterling worth of tea, chiefly to England.

We have heard a good deal of late about a scientific frontier for India, and I am not going to say one word here on that vexed subject. But it may be well for us to realise the meaning of an *unscientific* frontier in India. The unscientific frontier of the last century signified that sixty thousand square miles of border-land (double the whole area of Scotland) were abandoned to jungle and the wild beasts, not because there were no people to cultivate the soil, but because they did not dare to do so. An unscientific frontier signified that a tract which might have yielded, and which will yet yield, thirty millions sterling worth of food each year, lay untilled through terror of the turbulent hill races. The improvements effected by a century of British rule in this old unscientific frontier mean that 13,000 square miles have already been brought under the plough, growing each year sixteen millions sterling worth of produce, or more than the whole cost of the Indian army and of the defence of the Indian Empire.

The task of freeing India from foreign invasion was, however, only the first of many heavy responsibilities which our acquisition of the country entailed. The dying throes of the Mughal Empire had let loose its disbanded or revolted armies upon the people. The troops, finding that their pay was no longer forthcoming from the Muhammadan treasury, lived by open pillage. In what are now the most peaceful and most populous districts of Bengal, there were, in the last century, standing camps of banditti numbering 40,000 men. Many of the principal native families, being ruined by the exactions of the Musalmán tax-gatherers, betook themselves to plunder. They sheltered the banditti on their estates, levied black-mail from the surrounding villages as the price of immunity from depredation, and shared in the pillage of such as would not come to terms. Their country-houses were robber-strongholds, and the English judges of the last century have left it on record that a gang-robbery never occurred in Bengal without a landed proprietor being at the bottom of it.

Lawlessness breeds lawlessness, and the miserable peasants, stripped of their little hoards, were forced to become plunderers in their turn. "Many husbandmen," says an official report of 1771, "who have hitherto borne the first of characters among their neighbours, pursue this last resource to procure themselves a subsistence." The Council at Calcutta reported in 1772 that organised gangs of robbers were burning, plundering, and ravaging the interior districts of Bengal in bodies of 50,000 men. The English found no police in India to cope with this great evil. Each village had its watchman, but the village watchman would have been powerless against the robber-gangs, and so he entered into league with them. For a time the East India Company's troops were constantly engaged against the banditti. In 1773 we hear of our Sepoys "being totally defeated" by a robber horde, and "their English leader with the whole party cut off." But by degrees these vast armies of banditti were broken up, and scattered themselves over the country in smaller gangs.

Such lawlessness was the normal condition of all India for a full half century, and in some provinces for many centuries, before the advent of British rule. A long succession of invaders during 700 years, had crushed beneath them the preceding races. In many instances, the previous inhabitants were driven from their fields altogether and forced to take refuge in the mountains or jungles. They then became what is called in India a "depressed race," or a "predatory caste." In every province we see one or more of these depressed or vanquished races, such as the Bhars of Oudh, the Bhils of Jalaun, the Gaulis of the central provinces, the Chandels and Bundelas of Bundelkhand, the Ahams of Assam, besides the numerous hill tribes scattered over the country. We found more than a hundred hereditary "predatory castes" or tribes in India, and many of their names are still preserved to our days in the census of 1871; that is to say, there were more than one hundred resolute communities openly living from generation to generation by plunder.

Here, then, was a great organisation of the criminal classes, which had existed from time immemorial, and which the English had to put down without the aid of any regular police. At first the Company's servants attempted to extirpate crime by copying the cruel criminal code of the Musalmáns. Warren Hastings, for example, made a law that every convicted gang-robber should be executed; that he should be executed in all the forms and terrors of the native law in his own village; that his whole family should be made slaves, and that every inhabitant of the village should be fined. The gang-robbers retaliated by incendiarism on a great scale throughout the country. In 1780 they are believed to have caused the conflagration of Calcutta which burned down 15,000 houses. Nearly 200 people perished in the flames. "A few nights ago," says a Calcutta newspaper of 1780, "four armed men entered the house of a Moorman, near Chowringhi," the principal street, "and carried off his daughter." No native ever ventured out after dusk with a "good shawl on; and it was the invariable practice, even in

English mansions in Calcutta, for the porter to lock the outer door at the commencement of dinner, and not to open it again till the butler brought him word that the plate was safely shut up in its strong box. Clear cases of fire-raising are constantly recorded, and at length it was gravely "recommended that all those owning straw houses should have a long bamboo with three hooks at the end to catch the villains."

All this has changed. Strange as it may sound, there is now less crime in India than in England. That is to say, for each million persons in England and Wales there are about 870 criminals always in gaol. In India, where the police is very completely organised, there are only 614 prisoners in gaol for each million of the people. Moreover, in England and Wales there are 340 women in gaol for each million of the female population, while in India they have only twenty-eight women in gaol for each million of the female population. The petty offences, punished by a fine, are also less numerous in Bengal than in England, compared with the total number of inhabitants. The use of troops against banditti is now a thing of the past. The existence of an army is less realised in a rural district of Bengal than in an English shire. Of the sixty-three millions of people in that Province, probably forty millions go through life without ever seeing the face of a soldier.

A century of British rule has, therefore, not only secured the Indian frontier from invaders, but it has freed the interior of India from banditti. This, I think, is a work of which we may all feel proud. How has that great triumph of good government been achieved? Partly by legislation and partly by police. The English in India recognised the fact that they had a special class of crimes to deal with, and they framed a special department of criminal law to put those crimes down. "The *Dakaites* or gang-robbers of Bengal," so runs a State paper written in 1772, "are not, like the robbers of England, individuals driven to such desperate courses by sudden want. They are robbers by profession and even by birth. They are formed into regular communities, and their families subsist by the spoils which they bring home to them." These spoils were frequently brought from great distances; and peaceful villages 300 miles up the Ganges lived by housebreaking in Calcutta. A special law was therefore framed against the crime of *dakaiti*, or gang-robbery, that is to say, robbery committed by five or more persons. Another special crime was *thagi*, or strangling dexterously performed by bands of professional murderers disguised as travelling merchants or pilgrims. The *Thags* and *Dakaites*, or hereditary stranglers and gang-robbers, thought none the worse of themselves for their profession, and were regarded by their countrymen with an awe which in the last century could hardly be distinguished from respect. "I am a *Thag* or strangler of the Royal Records," one of these gentlemen was good enough to explain to an English officer: "I and my fathers have been professional stranglers for twenty generations." Accordingly special laws were framed to deal with the crime of "being a *Thag*" or professional strangler.

Special laws, however, would have done very little without special police. A separate department of the criminal administration was therefore created to deal with these wide-spread special crimes of India. It has effectively done its work. Some time ago I was taken to visit the principal gaol of one of the Indian provinces. At parting, when I was thanking the governor of the gaol for all he had shown me, he exclaimed: "Ah! there is one thing more which we must not forget to see." He took me to a well-ventilated comfortable room in the gaol hospital, where, lolling upon pillows, reclined a venerable white-bearded man. "This," he said, "is the last of our *Thags*. He alone survives of the batch which we received twenty-five years ago." I found that the venerable strangler had been for fifteen years enjoying himself in the hospital, the object of much solicitude to the doctors, and his life carefully prolonged by medical comforts, as an interesting relic of the past.

Nevertheless, this problem also presents itself from time to time, although in a mitigated form. The old predatory castes, the survivals of down-trodden, half-exterminated races under the native dynasties, still cling to their wandering life. But most of them, like the Bediyas, are now merely gipsy families who roam from village to village, earning a little rice by their singing or juggling, and by their dexterity as bird-catchers, basket weavers, and fortune-tellers. Their boldest flight in robbery is the petty pilfering of a stray chicken or kid. In recently annexed parts of India, however, as in the province of Oudh, the old predatory clans still give trouble. A special law, entitled the Criminal Tribes Act, has accordingly been levelled against them, and is occasionally enforced. For example, in the Gonda district of Oudh, which passed under British rule only in 1855, there is a caste of professional thieves called Barwárs. They spread over the country in communities of forty or fifty, and have no objection to rob temples, but will not steal cattle. They go on more distant expeditions in parties of two or three. Their plunder is fairly divided, a portion being set apart to buy offerings of goats and ardent spirits for their patron goddess, and a fixed percentage being paid to the landholder of the village. They carry on their trade with hereditary skill; but the rules of their religion sternly restrict their operations to the daytime, between sunrise and sunset. Any Barwár stealing by night is ignominiously turned out of the caste. These scrupulous gentlemen numbered 2,500 in a single *pargana* or parish. But they have, under British rule, sunk from their ancient dignity as an hereditary robber-community, and, like my old friend the professional strangler in the gaol hospital, they are regarded with much interest by the local authorities as a relic of the past. They have been placed under the operation of the Criminal Tribes Act, and are now betaking themselves to the more commonplace callings of small husbandmen and petty pilferers. Throughout almost the whole of British India the ancient special crimes have been extirpated. The old criminal tribes find it more profitable to be on the side of the law

than against it, and now seek employment as detectives or house-watchmen. We have seen how the Indian navy, after having swept the sea of piracy, and cleared out the robber-nests at the river mouths, finished its work, and was abolished eighteen years ago. In like manner, the old lawlessness in the interior has now disappeared, and the special branch of the criminal administration, known as the *Thagi* and *Dakaiti* or Stranglers' and Gang-robbers' Department, has practically ceased from its operations in British India.

We have of late years heard a great deal about Indian famines. The heart of England has been touched by tales of suffering and privation on a vast scale, and the charity of England has flowed forth on a scale equally munificent. Famine is now recognised as one of the most difficult problems with which the Indian Administration has to deal. A hundred years ago it was regarded not as a problem of administration, but as a visitation of God utterly beyond the control of man. When the rains, on which the crops depended, fell short, no crops were reared, and the people perished. Sometimes their failure was confined to a single district, and only a few thousand families starved to death. Sometimes their failure extended to a province, and the victims were counted by hundreds of thousands. More rarely the rains failed over a still greater area, and, as in 1770, ten millions of people perished. The loss of life was accepted in each case as a natural and an inevitable consequence of the loss of the crop. The earth had yielded no food, and so the people, in the ordinary and legitimate course of things, died. The famine of 1837 left behind so terrible a memory, that to this day the peasants of Hamirpur employ it as an era by which to calculate their ages.

Here is a bird's-eye view of a single famine in the last century, taken almost word for word from the official records. "The fields of rice," one of the native superintendents of Bengal reported in the autumn of 1769, "are become like fields of dried straw." "The mortality," wrote the President of the Bengal Council in the following spring—"the mortality, the beggary exceed all description. Above one-third of the inhabitants have perished in the once plentiful province of Purniah, and in other parts the misery is equal." All through the stifling summer of 1770 the people went on dying. The husbandmen sold their cattle; they sold their implements of agriculture; they devoured their seed-grain; they sold their sons and daughters, till at length no buyer of children could be found; they ate the leaves of trees and the grass of the field; and in June 1770 the Resident at the Darbar affirmed that the living were feeding on the dead. Day and night a torrent of famished and disease-stricken wretches poured into the great cities. At an early period of the year, pestilence had broken out. In March we find small-pox at Murshidabad, where it glided through the viceregal guards, and cut off the Prince Syfut in his palace. The streets were blocked up with promiscuous heaps of the dying and dead. Interment could not do its work quick enough; even the dogs and jackals, the public scavengers of the East, became unable to accomplish their revolting work, and the multi-

tude of mangled and festering corpses at length threatened the existence of the citizens.

Two years after the dearth, Warren Hastings made a progress through Bengal, and he deliberately states the loss to have been "at least one-third of the inhabitants," or probably about ten millions of people. Nineteen years later, the next Governor-General, Lord Cornwallis, had still to report to the Court of Directors that one-third of the Company's territory in Bengal was "a jungle inhabited only by wild beasts."

In that terrible summer of 1770, in which ten millions of peasants perished, only 9,000*l.* were distributed to aid the starving population of Bengal. A century later, in the much milder Bengal scarcity of 1874, the British Government spent close on four millions sterling, and during the last five years, ending 1878, it has devoted over fourteen millions sterling to feeding its people during famine. Here is one great difference between the last century and the present one. But it is by no means the most important difference. In the last century, neither the Government nor the people thought that it was possible to deal with a great Indian famine. Any such efforts were, in the words of the Bengali proverb, merely *watering the top of a tree whose roots were cut*. In the present century, earnest efforts have been made to bring famine within administrative control. A vast organisation of preventive and remedial agencies is constantly kept in readiness to deal with the periodically recurring dearths. Canals, irrigation works of many kinds, railways, roads, steamboats, and every improved form of modern communication, together with State charity in India and the munificent benevolence of the British nation at home—these are the weapons with which the Indian Government now does battle against famine.

That battle is not yet won. Many Indian administrators of great experience, both English and native, still believe that, when a real famine has once developed itself, it is impossible to prevent a terrible loss of life. This is a subject which will require very faithful dealing. The temptation in modern times is not to grudge State aid during famine, but to lavish the public funds with an open hand, so that each official may be able to say that nothing which money could accomplish for the starving population was left undone. The problem of Indian famine is still unsolved; but it has been accepted by all earnest administrators as one for which we must anxiously labour to find a solution. Permanent depopulation from any cause is now unknown. No frontier belt is left waste through fear of invasions from the north, no provinces are swept clean by Marhatta cavalry from the south, no villages are laid waste by internal banditti, and no fields are now left bare of inhabitants through famine. In the last century all these causes of depopulation were at work. The quick-growing jungle spread over the deserted land, and the fierce beasts of the tropics were the undisputed lords of fertile tracts. In the old revenue accounts of the native Government during the last century, there was a column in each district for *palātika* or deserted lands,

literally "the lands from which the people had fled." Even ten years after the famine of 1770, a once populous district was a silent jungle; and in 1780 a small body of Sepoys could with difficulty force its way through its forests. "For 120 miles," says an eye-witness, "they marched through but an extensive wood, all the way a perfect wilderness; sometimes a small village presented itself in the midst of these jungles, with a little cultivated ground around it, hardly sufficient to encamp the two battalions. These woods abound with tigers and bears, which infested the camp every night, but did no other damage than carrying off a child and killing some of the gentlemen's baggage-bullocks."

As the rural communities relinquished their hamlets and drew closer together towards the centre of a district, the wild beasts pressed hungrily on their rear. In vain the East India Company offered a reward for each tiger's head sufficient to maintain a peasant's family in comfort for three months; an item of outlay which our officers deemed so important that when, in the financial crisis of 1790-91, the Treasury had to suspend all payments, it made the tiger money and diet allowance for prisoners the sole exceptions to the rule. In vain it spent the whole land-revenue of a frontier district in rewards for killing wild beasts. A belt of jungle filled with ferocious animals lay for years around the cultivated land. The official records frequently speak of the mail-bag being carried off by tigers, and the custom of the mail-runners carrying jangling rings or bells to scare away the wild beasts survived to our own day. Lord Cornwallis, in 1789, had to sanction a grant of public money to free the military road from the depredations of these animals.

The ravages of the wild elephants were on a larger scale, and their extermination formed one of the most important duties of the British officers after the country passed under our rule. Tigers, leopards, and wolves slew their thousands of men and their hundreds of thousands of cattle. But the herd of wild elephants was absolutely resistless, lifting off roofs, pushing down walls, trampling a village under foot as if it were a city of sand which a child had built upon the shore. In two parishes alone, during the last few years of the native administration, fifty-six hamlets with their surrounding lands "had all been destroyed and gone to jungle, caused by the depredations of wild elephants." Another official return states that forty market villages throughout Bírghúm district had been deserted from the same cause. Large reductions had to be made in the land-tax, and the East India Company borrowed tame elephants from the native Viceroy's stud in order to catch the wild ones. "I had ocular proof on my journey," writes an English officer in 1791, "of their ravages. The poor timid native ties his cot in a tree, to which he retires when the elephants approach, and silently views the destruction of his cottage and the whole profits of his labour." "One night," writes an English surveyor in 1810, "although I had a guard, the men of the village close to my tent retired to the trees, and the women hid themselves among the cattle, leaving their huts a prey to the elephants, who know very well where to look for grain. Two nights before, some

of them had unroofed a hut in the village, and had eaten up all the grain which a poor family possessed." "Most fortunately for the population of the country," wrote the greatest elephant-hunter of the last century, "they delight in the sequestered range of the mountains; if they preferred the plains, whole kingdoms would be laid waste."

All this is now changed. One of the complaints of the modern Englishman in India is that he can so seldom get a shot at a tiger. Wolves are dying out in many provinces; the ancient Indian lion has disappeared. The wild elephant is so rare that he is specially protected by the Government, and in most parts of India he can only be caught by official license or under official supervision. Many districts have petitioned for a close season, so as to preserve the edible game still remaining. The only animal that has defied the energy of the British official is the snake. One may, however, judge of the loss of life by wild beasts in the last century from the deaths caused by this, their chief survivor at the present day. The ascertained number of persons who died from snake-bite in 1875 was 17,000, out of a total of 21,391 killed by snakes and all other wild animals. The deaths from wild beasts in the last century were probably not under 150,000 a year.

I shall now briefly summarise some of the outward and most visible results of a century of British rule. As regards the northern or Himalayan frontier of India, the wild hill tribes are no longer invaders, but are employed as loyal soldiers or border police. As regards the southern frontier of India, the sea, the pirate races have been converted into cheap and excellent seamen. Indian waters are now as safe as the English Channel, and the Indian navy, having finished its work, is disbanded. As regards internal disturbances, banditti are unknown, breaches of the law are rarer in India than in England, and the special department which was created to deal with the old special crimes of India now finds no more work to do within the British provinces. Famine, which in the last century was considered beyond any help of man, has been accepted as the great administrative problem of our day; and a vast organisation of public works, State relief, and private charity, is interposed between the Indian races and the merciless calamities of nature. As regards the reclamation of waste land, formerly the local hero, or eponymous village-founder, was the man who cut down the jungle; now a special branch of legislation is required to enable the Government to conserve what jungle remains, and to plant fresh forests. These are a few of the outward and visible results of a century of British rule in India. In the February number of the CORNHILL we shall examine some of its less obvious but equally important consequences. We shall find that, great as has been the success of our countrymen in establishing peace and security throughout the rural provinces of India, they have accomplished a far more difficult task, and won even more glorious results, in the social emancipation, the industrial progress, and the moral enlightenment of the people.

W. W. HUNTER, LL.D.

A New Study of Tennyson.

THOSE who may happen to be familiar with the *Saturnalia* of Macrobius will remember that one of the most delightful episodes in that pleasant work are the two books in which Eustathius and Furius Albinus estimate the extent of Virgil's obligations to his predecessors. Eustathius having concluded a long and elaborate review of the passages in the Greek poets of which the great Roman had availed himself, Furius Albinus proceeds to trace him through Latin literature. He was half afraid, he said, to produce the formidable list of passages appropriated by the poet, because he might be exposing his favourite "to the censure of the malignant and unlearned." Remembering, however, that such parallels as he was about to point out have been common to poets of all ages, and haughtily observing that what Virgil condescended to borrow became him much more than the original owner—to say nothing of that owner becoming in some cases immortalised by the theft—Furius plunges into his theme. Between them these Langbaines of the fifth century made Conington very uncomfortable towards the end of the nineteenth; but if their disclosures have materially impaired Virgil's claims to originality, they have illustrated his faultless taste, his nice artistic sense, his delicate touch, his consummate literary skill. They initiated a new branch of study, they divulged a fruitful secret.

Without going so far as the thief in *Albumazar*, when he says,

This poet is that poet's plagiarism,
And he a third's till they all end in Homer,

it is still interesting and necessary to remember that there have appeared in all literatures, at a certain point in their development, a class of poets who are essentially imitative and reflective. They have usually been men possessed of great natural ability, extensive culture, refined taste, minute and comprehensive acquaintance with the literature which preceded them; they have occasionally been men endowed with some of the most precious attributes of original genius. The poets of Alexandria, the epic and elegiac poets of Rome, are the most striking types of this class in ancient times. Torquato Tasso, Gray, and Mr. Tennyson are, perhaps, the most striking types in the modern world. Of all these Virgil, Tasso, and the Laureate are undoubtedly the most distinguished. In addition, however, to their exquisite and peculiar beauties, which must of course be obvious to every one, they are all three of them pre-eminently learned. Their work has a twofold value; it has—to borrow an expression from the schools—not only an exoteric but an esoteric interest. To sit down, for instance, to the study of the *Eclogues*, the

Georgics, and the *Aeneid*, without being familiar with the illustrative masterpieces of Greek poetry and the fragments of old Roman literature, would be like travelling through a country rich with historical traditions and splendid with poetical associations without possessing any sense of either. The uncritical spectator might be satisfied with the sensuous glory of the scenery, the simple loveliness of cloud and landscape, and the thousand effects of contrast and perspective; but an enlightened man would feel something very like contempt for one who, with the Ilyssus and the Mincio whispering at his feet, was sensible only of the natural beauties of the landscape round him. Nature has indeed made one world, Art another. Mr. Tennyson has now, by general consent, taken his place among English classics; he too will have, like Virgil and Tasso, his critics and his commentators; and, unless we are much mistaken, one of the most important and fruitful departments of their labour will be that of tracing his obligations to his predecessors, of illustrating his wondrous assimilative skill, his tact, his taste, his learning. John de Peyraredé once observed that he knew no task more instructive than to compare Virgil's adaptations of Homer with the original passages—to note what details he rejected, what he added, what he softened down, what he thought proper to heighten. It was a perpetual study of the principles of good taste. In full confidence that what applies to Virgil in this case applies with equal justice to the work of our Laureate, we propose to devote a few pages to the subject, by way of inaugurating a branch of Tennysonian research which must necessarily be gradual and cumulative, but which will sooner or later become indispensable to a proper appreciation of his services to art. Every Englishman must be quite as jealous of the fame of the Laureate as our old friend Furius Albinus was of the fame of his beloved Virgil, and we have in truth as little fear as honest Furius of our remarks being construed into an insinuation of plagiarism against a great and noble poet.

We begin with *In Memoriam*. First will come the general scheme of the whole composition; secondly, the versification; thirdly, the examination of particular passages. The general scheme of the work is undoubtedly suggested by the series of sonnets and canzoni dedicated by Petrarch to the memory of Laura. Not only do the several divisions into which *In Memoriam* may be supposed to fall correspond with the divisions into which Petrarch's series may be fancifully divided, but the whole method and purpose of the two poets would seem to be precisely similar. *In Memoriam* may be not improperly described as an analytical study of the psychology of sorrow, and this assuredly is equally true of Petrarch's poems. In ninety-eight short pieces the Italian reiterates, now in tones of tempered grief, now of rapturous gratitude or pensive grateful retrospect, the truth so well put by his English pupil:—

'Tis better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all.

He tells how his earthly love for an earthly object, with fertile tem-

poral blessings though it was, has by death become transformed and purified. So exactly indeed do these two works correspond, that the parallel is not at all broken by the fact that the Italian is speaking of the love between man and woman, while the English poet is speaking of the friendship between man and man. If we except the religious speculations, the mysticism, and the modern scientific allusions of *In Memoriam*, it would not perhaps be too much to say that the germs at least of almost every section are to be found scattered up and down the *Sonetti e Canzoni in Morte di Madonna Laura*. A minute comparison between Petrarch and Mr. Tennyson, though it would amply repay minute investigation, and may some day become necessary, must be reserved for another place. We are by no means disposed to underrate Petrarch, but we hope the shade of Leopardi will forgive us for saying that the English poet has far surpassed the Laureate of Laura, even in his own peculiar style.

A great deal has been written about the versification of *In Memoriam*, and it has usually been stated that the scheme of its metre was borrowed from Ben Jonson (*Underwoods*, xxxix.; or *Catiline*, act ii., Chorus) or Sandys. Now it must be obvious to any one who has any ear that the rough and jolting verses of Jonson, utterly deficient in rhythm and cadence, supposing they did suggest the stanza, could have suggested nothing but the bald outline. They hold, in truth, about the same relationship to the matchless mechanism of the *In Memoriam* stanza as the hexameters of the *Iliad* hold to the hexameters of *Evangeline*. We once thought that the peculiarly beautiful cæsura effect which characterises the versification of Mr. Tennyson's poem was to be numbered among his many debts to Wordsworth. See the *Affliction of Margaret*. This poem, though not in the Tennysonian quatrain, has exactly the same cadence; but there can be no doubt that the measure, the hint of the cadence, and indeed the whole cast of the metre have been taken from a very rare volume, scarcely known even to professed students of our early poetry—the occasional verses of Lord Herbert of Cherbury. Some of Herbert's stanzas are so similar to *In Memoriam*, that even a nice ear might excusably mistake one or two of them for the Laureate's. They occur in a piece entitled *An Ode upon the Question, whether Love should continue for ever* :—

Oh ! no, beloved, I am most sure
 These virtuous habits we acquire,
 As being with the soul entire,
 Must with it evermore endure.
 Else should our souls in vain elect,
 And vainer yet were Heaven's laws,
 When to an everlasting cause
 They give a perishing effect.
 Not here on earth, then, nor above,
 Our good affections can impair;
 For where God doth admit the fair,
 Think you that He excludeth love?

These eyes again thine eyes shall see,
 These hands again thine hands enfold,
 And all chaste blessings can be told
 Shall with us everlasting be.

For if no use of sense remain,
 When bodies once this life forsake,
 Or they could no delight partake,
 Why should they ever rise again?

Let then no doubt, Celinda, touch,
 Much less your fairest mind invade;
 Were not our souls immortal made,
 Our equal loves can make them such.

It seems a pity that this rare volume should not have found some one enterprising enough to reprint it. Lord Herbert's fame as a prose writer would have sufficed to carry off verses much less excellent than these.

The noble verses which open *In Memoriam* are obviously a trans- fusion, so to speak, of some verses of Lord Herbert's brother, George Herbert, who appears to be a favourite with the Laureate. A comparison of Herbert's first stanza with the opening of Mr. Tennyson's poem will at once illustrate the fine art of the latter poet, and the peculiar manner in which he has, more or less unconsciously no doubt, availed himself of his predecessor's poem.

Strong Son of God, Immortal Love,

Thine are these orbs of light and shade :

Thou madest life in man and brute ;

Thou madest Death, and lo, thy foot

Is on the skull which Thou hast made,

Immortal Love, Author of this great frame,

Sprung from that beauty which can never fade,

How hath man parcell'd out Thy glorious name,

And thrown it on the dust which Thou hast made !

HERBERT, *Love*.

Whether I fly with angels, fall with dust,
 Thy hands made both, and I am there.

And Thou hast made him : Thou art just.

In Mem.

And God has promised : He is just.

HERBERT, *The Discharge*.

Our little systems have their day,

And Thou, O Lord, art more than they.

In Mem.

Lord, though we change, Thou art the same.

HERBERT, *Whit-Sunday*.

That mind and soul, according well,
May make one music.

In Mem.

That so Thy favours, granting my request,
They and my mind may chime.

HERBERT, *Denial*.

Confusions of a wasted youth.

This curious use of the word is in *Vaughan the Silurist* :—

These dark *confusions* that within me rest (*Dressing*).

It would of course be absurd to assert that these resemblances are conscious imitations, but, as they lie within the compass of forty-four lines, they are at least curious enough to be pointed out. A striking instance of Mr. Tennyson's happy power of enriching and elaborating the rough material of others is seen in the use he has made of a passage in which Cowper (*Task*, book vi. lines 88-99) draws a distinction between knowledge and wisdom :—

Knowledge and wisdom, far from being one,
Have oftentimes no connection: knowledge dwells
In heads replete with thoughts of other men;
Wisdom in minds attentive to their own.
Knowledge, a rude unprofitable mass,
The mere materials with which Wisdom builds,
Till smooth'd, and squared, and fitted to its place,
Does but encumber when it should enrich.
Knowledge is proud that he has learn'd so much;
Wisdom is humble that he knows no more.

Now mark how this is reproduced *more suo* by Mr. Tennyson (*In Memoriam*, cxiv.):

Who loves not Knowledge?

Let her work prevail.

But on her forehead sits a fire;
She sets her forward countenance,
And leaps into the future chance,
Submitting all things to desire.

Let her know her place:

She is the second, not the first.

A higher hand must make her mild,
If all be not in vain, and guide
Her footsteps, moving side by side
With Wisdom, like the younger child:
For she is earthly, of the mind;
But Wisdom heavenly, of the soul.

Cowper is again recalled in lxxxiii. :—

Laburnums dropping-wells of fire—

suggested perhaps by *Task*, vi. 149:

Laburnum,
Rich in *streaming gold*.

As our list will be a long one, it will perhaps be well to put down the imitations, adaptations, or resemblances, without making any regular running commentary, though we may presume that those from the Greek and Roman classics were intentional.

Never morning wore
To evening but some heart did break. (vi.)

from Lucretius:

Nec nox ulla diem neque noctem Aurora secuta est,
Quæ non audierit mixtos vagitibus ægris
Ploratus.

His heavy-shotted hammock shroud
Drops in his vast and wandering grave. (Id.)

from Shakspeare, *Richard III.* act i. sc. 3:

To seek the empty vast and wandering air.
And from his ashes may be made
The violet of his native land. (xviii.)

Persius, *Sat.* i. 39:

Nunc non e tumulto fortunataque favilla
Nascentur violæ?

That strikes by night a craggy shelf,
And staggers blindly ere she sink. (xvi.)

For this graphic touch see Napier, *History of the Peninsular War* (Battle of Albuera):

The Fusileer battalions, struck by the iron tempest, reeled and staggered like a sinking ship.

The beautiful euphemism "to cease," for to die (xxxiv.), is of course from Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale*:

To cease upon the midnight with no pain.
'Tis better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all. (xxvii.)

Congreve, *Way of the World*, act ii. sc. 2:

'Tis better to have been left than never to have been loved.

Or possibly, as has been before suggested by Thackeray, *Pendennis*, vol. i. chap. vi.—"It is best to love wisely no doubt, but to love foolishly is better than not to be able to love at all."

The moanings of the homeless sea. (xxxv.)

This splendid line is partly from Horace, *Ode* ii. 20:

Visam gementis litora Bospori;

partly from Shelley's "homeless streams," described in *Alastor*.

Like light in many a shiver'd lance
That breaks about the dappled pools.

Of Mr. Browning's *Pauline*:

Tall trees overarch to keep us in,
Breaking the sunbeams into emerald shafts.

No lapse of moons can canker love. (xxvi.)

Shakspeare, *Sonnet cxvi.* :

Love's not Time's fool ;

Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks.

There must be wisdom with great death. (li.)

is the versification of an idea which Sir Thomas Browne has in his *Religio Medici* thrown into many forms. Milton has described Death as the "keeper of the keys of all creeds," and Pope as "the great teacher."

My words are only words, and moved
Upon the topmost froth of thought,

from Persius, *Sat. i.* 104 :

Summa delumbe saliva

Hoc natat in labris.

And *ave, ave, ave* said

Adieu, adieu for evermore.

Catullus, *Car. ci.* :

Atque in perpetuum frater ave atque vale.

In shadowy thoroughfares of thought

was obviously inspired by that weird line in Sophocles, so infinite in its suggestiveness—

Πολλὰς δ' ὁδοὺς ἐλθόντα φροντίδος πλάνοις—

on which Shelley has written an admirable commentary.

With the breeze of song. (lxxv.)

This is Pindar's (*Pythian* iv. 5) οὔρος ὑμνων.

Take wings of fancy and ascend, (lxxvi.)

from Petrarch, *Sonnet lxxxii.* :

Volo con l' ali de' pensieri al cielo.

The whole spirit of lxxvii. is from Petrarch, *Sonnet In Morte di Laura*, xxv. :

My darkened ways

Shall ring with music all the same :

To breathe my loss is more than fame,

To utter love more sweet than praise.

E certo ogni mio studio in quel temp' era

Pur di sfogare il doloroso core

In qualche modo, non d' acquistar fama.

Pianger cercai, non già del pianto onore.

In lxxxv. it would seem that the passage beginning

But Summer on the steaming floods,

was inspired by that heavenly sonnet of Petrarch's numbered xi. So also lxxxviii. is as obviously moulded on Dante, *Sonnet xxv.* A writer in *Notes and Queries* has also drawn attention to the singularly close resemblance between section lxxvi. and section lxxii. and the *Purgatorio*, canto xi. 91-106.

Ora che 'l mondo si adorna e veste—&c.

How pure at heart and sound in head—&c. (xciv.)

The whole of this piece is little else than a translation of the noble passage about the mood in which man is fitted for communion with his God in Jeremy Taylor's Fifth Golden Grove Sermon. In c. and ci. we find again the inspiration of Laura's lover—see sonnets xlii. and xliv.—though the exquisite descriptive touches are all Mr. Tennyson's.

The violet comes, but we are gone, (cv.)

is, of course, an epitome of the celebrated passage in Moschus' third *Idyll*, 100–105.

In cvii. the parody from Alcæus and Horace is obvious. In cxxvii. "the brute earth" is Horace's "bruta tellus," or perhaps directly from *Comus*, 797 :

And the brute earth would lend her nerves—

as the "glorious lies" is probably a mistranslation of Plato's *θεῖα ψευδῆ*.

We will now go on to collate other parallel passages at random up and down Mr. Tennyson's poems, though we do not propose to trace his obligations to Shelley and Keats, as they would of themselves form an interesting paper.

I earth in earth forget these empty courts (Tithonus).

This happy Hellenism is in Stephen Hawes' *Pastime of Pleasure*, capit. xlv. :

When *earth in earth* hath ta'en his corrupt taste.

The slow, sweet hours that bring us all things good;
The slow, sweet hours that bring us all things ill,
And all good things from evil.—*Love and Duty*.

Imitated, apparently, from Theocritus, *Idyll* xv. 104–5 :

Βάρδισται μακρῶν ὤραι φίλαι, ἀλλὰ ποθεινὰ
ἔρχονται, πάντες αἱ βροτοῖσιν ἔει τι φοροῖσαι.

Again, in the same poem, the lovers' meeting irresistibly reminds us of a similar scene in Wordsworth's *Vandracour and Julia*. Take two passages :

The summer night, that paus'd
Among her stars to hear us : stars that hung
Love-charm'd to listen—all the wheels of Time
Spun round in station ; but the end had come.—*Love and Duty*.

The galaxy display'd
Her fires, that like mysterious pulses beat
Aloft—momentous but uneasy bliss;
To their full hearts the universe seemed hung
On that brief meeting's slender filament.—WORDSWORTH.

In this passage Mr. Tennyson has scarcely improved his model ; but in another, for the germ of which it would seem that he was also indebted to that consummate master of language, he certainly has. There are few passages in our literature so perfect in onomatopoeic effect as the following :

Dry clashed his harness in the icy caves
 And barren chasms, and all to left and right
 The bare black cliff clang'd round him, as he based
 His feet on slippery crag that rang
 Sharp smitten.—*Passing of Arthur.*

Now compare Wordsworth :

With the din
 Meanwhile the precipices rang aloud,
 The leafless trees, and every icy crag
 Tinkled like iron.

As we have alluded to the *Passing of Arthur*, we may, omitting the obvious Homeric and Virgilian imitations, notice a very singular appropriation or coincidence. The two fine lines—

For so the whole round world is every way
 Bound by gold chains about the feet of God—

are the versification of a sentence from Archdeacon Hare's sermon on the *Law of Self-Sacrifice* :

This is the golden chain of love whereby the whole creation is bound to the throne of the Creator.

The lovely stanza in the verse to "J. S."—

His memory long will live alone
 In all our hearts, as mournful light
 That broods above the fallen sun
 And dwells in heaven—

may have been distilled from two lines in Dryden's noble tragedy of *Don Sebastian*, act i. scene 1 :

If I fall,
 I shall be like myself; a setting sun
 Should leave a track of glory in the skies.

The cynical aspiration of the young hero in *Locksley Hall*, that he might "burst all links of habit," "take some savage woman who should rear his dusky race," be mated with a squalid savage, so get more enjoyment than he could hope for in this march of mind, finds a curious parallel in Beaumont's *Philaster*, act iv. sc. 2 :

Oh, that I had been nourish'd in the woods,
 and not known
 The right of crowns, nor the dissembling trains
 Of women's looks
 And then had taken me some mountain girl,
 Beaten with winds, that might have strewed my bed
 With leaves and reeds, and have borne at her big breasts
 My large coarse issue. This had been a life
 Free from vexation.

The Elizabethan dramatists have also furnished the germ of a fine passage in the *Dream of Fair Women*. Cleopatra says :

Once, like the moon, I made
The ever-shifting currents of the blood,
According to my humour, ebb and flow.

What says Susan Carter to Frank in Ford's *Witch of Edmonton*?
act ii. sc. 2—

You are the powerful moon of my blood's sea,
To make it ebb and flow into my face,
As your looks change.

Ye may ne see for peeping flowers the grass,

writes George Peele, in that loveliest of pastoral dramas, *The Arraign-ment of Paris*.

You scarce could see the grass for flowers,

echoes Mr. Tennyson (*Two Voices*).

For the fine idea at the end of *Ænone*, it would seem also that he is indebted to another of the Elizabethan dramatists, and, with due deference to the genius of the later poet, how feebly do his verses echo the massive majesty of Shakspeare's greatest follower!

What this may be, I know not, but I know
That whereso'er I am by night and day,

All earth and air seem only burning fire.—Tennyson, *Ænone*.

Now for Webster:

The heaven o'er my head seems made of molten brass,
The earth of flaming sulphur.—*Duchess of Malfi*, act iv. sc. 2.

As we have mentioned *Ænone*, we will go on to point out the passage in which Mr. Tennyson has—to use Addison's favourite phrase—*had his eye*:

Now the noon-day quiet holds the hill

is a *literal* translation of a line in Callimachus, *Lavacrum Palladis*, 72:

μεσαμβρινὰ δ' εἴχ' ὄρος ἄσυχλα.

The next line,

The lizard, with his shadow on the stone,
Rests like a shadow,

was doubtless suggested by a line in that exquisite Idyll in Theocritus (the seventh), of which Mr. Tennyson has availed himself elsewhere:

Ἀνίκα δὴ καὶ σαῦρος ἐφ' αἰμασιᾶσι καθέδρει.

The whole of the beautiful passage—

And at their feet the *crocus* brake like fire,
Violet, amaranthus, and asphodel,
Lotus and lilies.

And o'er him flowed a *golden cloud*, and leaned
Upon him, *slowly dropping fragrant dew*—

is taken, with one or two additions and alterations in the names of the flowers, from *Iliad*, xiv. 347-352, with a reminiscence, no doubt, of the gorgeous passage in *Paradise Lost*, bk. iv. 695-702.

Nor is the happy touch about the *crocus* breaking like fire original,

being simply a version of Sophocles' *χρυσανθής κρόκος* (*Œdip. Col.* 685) with a memory perhaps of Wordsworth's flowers that set *the hills on fire* (*Ruth*).

Few tasks would be more pleasant than to follow the Laureate step by step through the Arthurian poems, comparing them with the original romance, of which he has of course made the same use as Shakspeare made of Holinshed's *Chronicles*. Here, however, we must confine ourselves to a very few illustrations. The whole of *Elaine* is taken, with the exception of the ornaments and illustrative poetical matter, from part iii. chapters cxxiii. and cxxiii., while much of the tone of the Fourth *Æneid* has been *transfused* into it. In like manner the *Passing of Arthur* is derived from part iii. chapters clvii. clviii.; but all the sublimity and weirdness of the Laureate's splendid description of the battle is his own. It is possible that he may have borrowed the horror of the mist from some account of the battle of Barnet, which was fought under circumstances similar to those of Arthur's last fight. How closely he sometimes follows his original may be illustrated by one or two quotations. Of Lancelot, the History says, chapter clxxvi.:

Thou wert the *goodliest* person that ever came among press of knights, and thou wert the meekest man and the gentlest that ever eat in hall among ladies.

Marr'd as he was, he seem'd the *goodliest* man
That ever among ladies ate in hall,
And noblest.

Again:

And then he threw the sword into the water as far as he might, and there came an arm and an hand above the water and caught it, and so shook it thrice and brandished it.—*History*.

And clutch'd the sword,
But ere he dipt the surface rose an arm,
And caught him by the hilt and brandish'd him
Three times.

The passage beginning "Then saw they how there hove a dusky barge," is taken with literal exactness from the *History*. But how gloriously has the Laureate transformed its bald simplicity here, as everywhere else, with the alchemy of his genius! Again, in *Elaine* he follows very closely the old romance, as may be seen by comparing the two following passages (*The Original*):—

And this was the letter, most noble knight, my Lord Sir Launcelot Du Lac. I was your lover, that men called the fair maid of Astolat. Therefore unto all ladies I make moan: yet for my soul that ye pray and bury me at the least. Pray for my soul, Sir Launcelot, as thou art a knight peerless.

Now compare with this *Elaine*, from line "Most noble Lord" to "As thou art a knight peerless."

In the verses to "J. S.," the beautiful phrase about tears—

Dew

Drawn from the spirit through the brain—

is borrowed from the matchless Alcaic stanza of Gray's on tears—

O lacrymarum fons tenero sacros
Ducentium ortus ex animo.

Mr. Tennyson's classical imitations are always singularly happy. We may instance his use of Homer's κύμα κωφόν (*Il.* xiv. 16), in

The blind wave feeling round his long sea-hall
In silence;

his imitation from Virgil (*Æn.* iv. 530)—

Ever failed to draw
The quiet night into her blood (*Geraint and Enid*)—

to whom also he is indebted for the model of the passage in *Elaine*—

Death, like a friend's voice, &c.;

for

O noble breast and all-puissant arms;

and

This way and that dividing the swift mind (*Morte d'Arthur*);

as well as many other passages obvious to the scholar. In truth, the Poet Laureate's debts to Homer and Virgil would make in themselves an interesting dissertation. In *Eleanore* he has laid both Sappho and Horace under contribution. To the latter he is indebted for the beautiful picture and the suggestive touch in—

His bow-string slackened languid love,
Leaning his cheek upon his hand, &c.

Compare—

Aderat querenti
Perfidum ridens Venus, et remisso
Filius arcu.

To the former he is indebted for all the passage which succeeds "My heart a charmed slumber keeps," which is an *almost literal translation* of the greater part of Sappho's incomparable ode, filtered perhaps through Catullus.

The two exquisite lines in *Mariana*—

Her tears fell with the dews at even,
Her tears fell ere the dews were dried—

were evidently adapted from two lines scarcely less beautiful, which indicate the loss poetry has received in the destruction of the works of Cinna.

Te matutinus flentem conspexit Eous,
Te flentem paulo vidit post Hesperus idem.

We have often thought the lines in the *Welcome to Alexandra*—

For Saxon or Dane or Norman are we,
Teuton or Celt, or whatever we be,
We are each of us Dane in our welcome of thee,

singularly happy; but we find that the Laureate has been anticipated in

his exquisite adulation by Martial De Spectaculis (Epig. iii.), enumerating the various nations which welcome Cæsar home. He concludes—

Vox diversa sonat populorum, est vox tamen una
Cum verus patrie diceris esse pater.

The happy comparison in *Enid*—

And arms on which the standing muscle slop'd
As slopes a wild brook o'er a little stone—

is taken, with an ingenious and happy turn in the image, from Theocritus (Idyll xxii.)—

ἐν δὲ μέγας στερεοῦσι βραχίουσιν ἄκρον ὑπ' ὤμων
ἕστασαν ἤθητε πέτροι ὀλοῖτροχοι, οὓς τε κυλίνδων
χειμάρρους ποταμὸς μεγάλας περιέζεσε δίνας.

The adaptations from Theocritus in the passage beginning "All the land . . . smelt of the coming summer," to the end of the paragraph, in *The Gardener's Daughter*, must be obvious to every scholar.

The gods themselves cannot recall their gifts (*Tithonus*)

is, of course, from Agathon, as quoted by Aristotle (*Eth. N. vi. 2*)—

μόνον γὰρ αὐτοῦ καὶ θεὸς στερίσκεται,
ἀγένητα ποιεῖν ἄσος' ἐν ᾗ πεπραγμένα.

The beautiful lines in *Lucretius*—

The gods who haunt
The lucid interspace of world and world
Where never creeps a cloud, &c.,

and the lines in the *Morte d'Arthur* describing Avilion—

Where falls nor hail nor rain nor any snow, &c.;

are of course closely modelled on *Odyssey* vi. 42-45, and on the lines 18-22 in the third book of the *De Rerum Naturâ*. We may also notice the curious coincidence between the verses in the epilogue—

And drove his heel into the smoulder'd log
That sent a blast of sparkles up the flue.

And Dante, *Paradiso*, canto xviii.—

Nel percuoter de' ciocchi arsi
Surgono innumerabili faville.

The burden of Elaine's song—

Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel,

reminds us of Dante's—

Però giri fortuna la sua ruota
Come le piace.—*Inferno*, xv. 95.

The couplet—

As when a great thought strikes along the brain,
And flushes all the cheek (*Dream of Fair Women*),

would certainly seem to have been suggested by a passage in the *Hymn to Hermes*—

ὡς δ' ὅπου' ὠκύς νόημα διὰ στέρνοιο πέρησιν
 "Ανερος
 αἱ δέ τε δινηθῶσιν ἀπ' ὀφθαλμῶν ἀμαρυγᾶι.

The weird and graphic touch in *Locksley Hall*—

And an eye shall vex thee, looking ancient kindness on thy pain,
 forcibly recalls the similarly strange and happy use of ὄμμα in Sophocles,
Electra, 902—

ἐμπαίει τί μοι
 ψυχῇ ξύνηθες ὄμμα.

We may mention in passing that another beautiful expression in
Locksley Hall—

Such an one do I remember *when to look at was to love*—
 would seem to have been adapted from Burns:

But to see her was to love her,
 Love but her and love for ever.

But we have lingered long enough among imitations from the Greek
 and Latin poets, and will collect a few more parallels from English
 literature, miscellaneously selected.

When Ilion like a mist rose into towers (*Tithonus*)
 is a memory of Milton's pandemonium (*Par. Lost*, book i.):

Out of the earth a fabric huge
 Rose like an exhalation.

In *Maud* (iv.) there is a fine image and idea borrowed apparently
 from Mr. Fitzgerald's splendid version of the *Rubaiyât* of Omar, where
 life is compared to a chess-board, and men to the pieces on the board.

Do we move ourselves, or are we moved by an unseen man at a game
 That pushes us off from the board, and others ever succeed?

In Mr. Fitzgerald's work we find men described as

Impotent pieces of the game he plays
 Upon this chequer board of nights and days,

.

And one by one back in the closet lays.

The picturesque touch in the *Princess*—

Their morions wash'd with morning—
 recalls forcibly Mr. Browning's *Florence*—

Wash'd by the morning's water-gold.—*Old Pictures at Florence.*

Curiously enough, the plot of *The Princess* seems to have been suggested
 by Dr. Johnson.

The princess thought that of all sublunary things knowledge was the best ; she desired first to learn all sciences, and then purposed to found a college of learned women in which she would preside.—Rasselas, ch. xlix.

The memorable couplet in *The Brook*—

Men may come and men may go, &c.—

recalls the old inscription on an Italian sun-dial—

Io vado et vengo ogni giorno,
Ma tu andrai senza ritorno.

In the verses entitled *Nothing will die*, the lines—

The world was never made ;
It will change, but it will not fade—

are, of course, from Shelley's *Cloud*—

I change, but I cannot die.

Here we must pause, though we have by no means exhausted our list of these interesting and instructive parallel passages. It would be absurd and presumptuous to conclude that any of the similarities which have been pointed out were deliberate or even conscious imitations. In Mr. Tennyson's own noble words, we moderns are "the heirs of all the ages." We live amid wealth as prodigally piled up as the massive and innumerable treasure-trove of Spenser's "rich strond." We have inherited the splendours of the literatures of Greece, of Rome, of Italy, and of the illustrious dynasties of English genius, and we know no task more delightful than that of tracing the resemblances between them. This is not the place for discussing the characteristics of Mr. Tennyson's genius, but thus much we may surely hazard without any fear of being mistaken for insensible critics. If ever there was a poet who might say with Horace—

Ego apis Matinæ
More modoque
Grata carpentis thyma per laborem
Plurimum . . . operosa
Carmina fingo—

"Like the bee of Matina feeding with endless toil on the sweet thyme, what I compose I compose with elaborate care"—it surely would be the Laureate. And who would not regard with curious interest the flowers from which his nectar has been drawn ? It has been observed of Virgil—and observed with justice—that he never fails to improve what he borrows, though Homer was his creditor. The same will almost universally apply to Tennyson—*nilil tetigit quod non ornavit*—what he does still betters what is done.

The Countess Idelcrantz.

I.

This is the curse of life! that not
 A nobler, calmer train
 Of wiser thoughts and feelings blot
 Our passions from our brain;
 But each day brings its petty dust
 Our soon-choked souls to fill;
 And we forget because we must,
 And not because we will.

ALL yesterday afternoon those lines haunted me, and I kept on repeating them to myself with an inward protest against their application to my own case and a plea that, if the dust of five-and-twenty years had settled a little upon certain treasured memories of mine, it did not lie so thick but that the merest glimpse of old associations was sufficient to brush it away. It was no good: my conscience somehow wouldn't listen to the protest nor accept the excuse. If I had been at home in England I might have felt, as I have always done, that though time has caused me to change my mind upon many points, it has effected no alteration in my heart; but standing there on the heights of the Djurgård, with that marvellous prospect of rocks and woods, hills and islands, churches and palaces, and glittering expanse of lake and sea which make up the fair city of Stockholm spread out around and beneath me—standing there in the old place and looking down upon the old scene—upon the great flat-roofed palace and the perforated spire of the Riddarholms Kyrka and the Regerings-gatan, where she lived, and away yonder the cemetery where they laid her to rest so long ago now, I couldn't but acknowledge that something had passed away from me with the lapse of years, and that I was no longer quite the same man who had stood on that self-same spot one summer afternoon in the year 1854, despair in his soul and the shadow of a life-long sorrow turning all beauty and sunshine into darkness for him.

I suppose it must needs be so always. If pain and sorrow were to lose nothing of their first acuteness the business of the world would hardly get itself transacted; and a man who should allow his faculties and energies to be paralysed for ever by one blow, however severe, would be a poor sort of creature after all. Still, leaning over the parapet there, and watching the sun set behind the wooded islands of the Mälar lake, it gave me a great pang of regret—almost of remorse—to think how different my life has been from what I imagined it was going to be a

quarter of a century ago. All sorts of memories came back to me. I recollected dining with her once in the Djurgård, at the Hasselbacken restaurant, and walking in the woods with her afterwards, and all that she said. I recollected our rides to Ulriksdal and Drottningholm, and our skating-parties on the lake, and our little quarrels and reconciliations, and who knows what other trivialities, which I will not set down here. I recollected, in short, that I had forgotten a great deal; and therein, I suppose, lay the sting.

The dear old city is just the same. Hasselbacken is there yet: I could hear, from where I stood, the rattle of the knives and forks and the chatter and laughter of the people at the little round tables; and presently the band began to play, just as of old. Mute voices of a hundred familiar objects seemed to be whispering, "We are unchanged; but you—have you kept your vow? Have you been true to the past through all that has come and gone?"

I hardly know why I couldn't answer "Yes" at once. Judged by ordinary standards, I have not much to reproach myself with; indeed many people would call me a miracle of constancy. I have never married, nor thought of marrying; in one sense I have never forgotten; only in another and a deeper one, I am afraid I have—a little. Or at least so it seemed to me yesterday afternoon. What has my life been? Perhaps one might say a useful one, in my own rather limited sphere. I can't accuse myself of having been very happy; but then I am quite sure that no one has ever suspected me of being the reverse. The truth is that, when I shave myself in the mornings, my glass reflects the face of a hale, hearty, middle-aged man with the prospect of many years of health before him; a prosperous, contented sort of face; the typical face of a well-to-do landed proprietor, who represents his county in the Conservative interest, hob-nobs with his brother magistrates, and knows a good deal about high farming and fat beasts and foxes and pheasants and such things. My face, in point of fact, images myself with about as much accuracy as faces generally do image their owners. I am a little out of conceit with it this evening. It may be very absurd, but it is nevertheless the fact, that I should be far better pleased with myself if I were haggard and hollow-cheeked and wore an air of utter indifference to all the good things of this world. My fine physique strikes me as unpardonably vulgar, and my rude health as a kind of treachery. It is true that I hadn't much appetite for dinner to-night; but in general I eat a good deal. I am a big, strong man, and I can't help it.

And now, pondering over many things with a very sad heart, it has occurred to me that there might be some relief in writing down the history of those brief winter and summer months which, when all is said and done, were the best and happiest of my life—which were *all* my life, as I sometimes think—certainly all of it that I care to look back upon. How well I remember that bright autumn morning of the year 1854, when I got my first sight of Stockholm! I can see myself stepping

out upon the quay, as tall and handsome a young fellow as you could wish to meet—at the age of fifty-one my grey hairs and wrinkles surely entitle me to say so—with all the world before him, a sufficiency of money in his pocket, and a boundless capacity for amusement and wonder. Those were stirring times. Our fleet was cruising about in the Baltic; we had just knocked the Russians' fortress of Bomarsund about their ears; and people were beginning to talk of the restoration of Finland to its rightful owners, and to wonder how long Sweden was going to remain a passive spectator of the misdeeds of her ancient enemy. There was a good deal of tall talk, I recollect. Russia was to lose the Crimea, to be driven back behind the lakes of Vigo and Onega—obviously her natural frontier; Poland was to be liberated.

Well, I daresay our good friends the Swedes were ready enough to receive a young Englishman with open arms. I don't know whether they wouldn't have welcomed even a Russian; for, in truth, there could be nowhere in the world a more hospitable, warm-hearted, open-handed, pleasure-loving race than that which inhabited the capital of King Oscar I.; and I believe it was not so much because I was an Englishman as because I was a stranger and alone that I had hardly time to deliver my few letters of introduction before I was almost overwhelmed with kindness. The winter season was beginning; the Court had returned to the town; and entertainments of every sort and description were on foot. I took my share in all of them, nothing loth; I made my bow to the King, a tall, soldierly gentleman, with a grey moustache twirled upwards; I was made to feel myself perfectly at home in a trice. They say the French are the best-bred people in Europe, and perhaps it is true that they have the finest manners; but I think I could name one or two incidents of good breeding in which the Swedes have the advantage of them. There is an innate friendliness, a natural ease about these blue-eyed, fair-haired people which springs directly from their good hearts, and could indeed spring from no other source, I imagine.

My chief companion, guide, and introducer at that time was one Nordström, a young man of about my own age, of good family, comfortably off, though not rich, a keen sportsman, a bit of a lady-killer, and a popular fellow in society. He knew everybody and went everywhere. It was Nordström who taught me how to dance on skates; it was Nordström who arranged my appearance at Court; it was he who obtained the greater part of my invitations for me; and it was he who presented me to the Countess Adelerantz.

"You must know the Countess," Nordström said to me, one day. "Oh, yes, you cannot be said to have seen our society until you have passed through her *salons*. She is a young widow, beautiful as the morning, and wealthy as—as—oh, more wealthy than one can imagine. She has estates——" Here my friend drew in his breath, and described an enormous circle with his arms by way of conveying some faint idea of the lady's territorial grandeur. "They say she can drive a matter of

two hundred miles and use none but her own post-horses. You will understand that it is not everybody who is admitted into her house; but come only with me, and I will promise you a good reception."

I have hinted that my excellent friend Nordström owned no little influence with the ladies of his native city. He took a very innocent pride in this power of his, and was wont to boast that there was not a single house of any importance in Stockholm into which he did not possess a standing right of entry. Ladies, I have observed, very soon discover what are the objects and feelings of the men who affect their society, and know which of them they may admit to terms of friendly intimacy without fear of being misunderstood. The *belles dames* of Stockholm had, I presume, taken Nordström's measure without any difficulty, and at the time when I made his acquaintance they seemed to have agreed to treat him as a spoilt child. He made love to them all under the very noses of their husbands, without, so far as I ever heard, anything but good-humoured laughter coming of it; he called most of them by their Christian names, upon some pretexted fiction of cousinship, and he was good enough to entertain me with many anecdotes of their several dispositions, caprices, and *exigences*—which last, he used to declare, were a sore trouble to him. But when he mentioned the Countess Adelcrantz it was in a perceptibly altered tone. He spoke of her with an admiration amounting to enthusiasm, but in no wise approaching familiarity. He made no pretence of being among her intimates; but stated, with modest exultation, that she had been very gracious to him, and had already permitted him to bring one or two friends to her evening receptions. And indeed, when I met her, I fully understood Nordström's mental attitude towards this marvellous Countess, and, for my own part, could only acquiesce in its fitness.

As I sit here in my bedroom at Rydberg's Hotel, I stop scribbling for a moment, I close my eyes, and a picture rises up clearly before me from out of the mists of those dead-and-gone times. I see a spacious room, lighted by multitudes of wax candles in glittering crystal chandeliers; I see a profusion of exotics piled up in the embrasures of the windows; I see groups of ladies in full toilette standing on the polished *parquet*—a blaze of diamonds, a mass of many-coloured uniforms. And, oh, what uniforms they were, some of them! What gorgeous combinations of dark and light blue and yellow and silver and gold! What resplendent hussars! what fearful and wonderful dragoons and lancers! There was one regiment, I remember—its special designation has escaped me—the apparel of whose officers used to fill me with delight and amazement. Their blue garments were made to fit them literally like skins, and, instead of being ornamented with the customary gold lace, were covered with constellations of little gilt buttons. How these gentlemen got into their clothes, and how, having got into them, they contrived to mount their horses, is more than I can imagine; but their general appearance was very pleasing indeed, and never palled upon me. I used to

wonder sometimes what Charles XII. in his threadbare coat and rusty hat would have said to them. Well, I can see all this, and a great deal more; and in the doorway is standing a tall and graceful lady, with the whitest skin, the most golden hair, the bluest eyes, and the longest eyelashes that ever were seen. The folding-doors have just been flung open by a couple of footmen in oddly-cut, rather gaudy liveries, and two young fellows are making their entrance—one of them a little dazed and bewildered by all this magnificence.

I don't know that I can give any more exact description of the Countess Adelcrantz than is contained in the few words which I have just set down. She was supremely beautiful—everyone, I think, agreed as to that—but of course she was something more than beautiful; else I should hardly be writing about her now after all these years. And there is the difficulty. I couldn't convey any idea of the charm of her manner and speech if I were to take pages over it. It was something peculiar to herself—something at once sympathetic and soothing and faintly intoxicating. It is not to be described; but those who have been under her spell—and there must be many such still living—know what I mean. She must at this time have been in her twenty-fifth year; but then and for long afterwards she gave me the idea of being—I won't say—more than her age; but certainly much older than myself. As a matter of fact, she was by one year my junior; but then I was remarkably youthful both outwardly and inwardly—a mere hobbledehoy in comparison with one of her knowledge and varied experiences; and if the truth must be confessed, it was as a mere hobbledehoy and nothing more that she appeared to regard me. She addressed a few words to me, smilingly, but certainly rather condescendingly, when Nordström pronounced my name, and then turned to speak to one of the cavaliers who were stationed around her like a small bevy of court officials round their queen. It was her custom to receive her guests in this quasi-royal fashion; a custom which in anyone else might have struck one as a trifle ridiculous, but which in her seemed only natural and proper.

I fell back, and leant against the wall, watching her, while other arrivals defiled before her and passed on through the rooms, most of them making their way towards a smaller *salon* at the end of the suite, where a sort of impromptu dance had been set on foot. A cat may look at a king, and why should not I look at this beautiful lady, who was unquestionably worth a little study? To describe feminine costume is beyond the range of my powers; but I know that she wore a silk dress of the palest pink hue, that her ornaments were pearls, and that her hair was arranged in a mass of tiny clustering curls, which in those days was a somewhat unusual style of *coiffure*. She talked with a good deal of animation, I noticed, now to one, now to another of her attendant squires; but it was obvious to me that in her estimation they were but so many lay-figures, and that she addressed the one who might happen to be nearest to her elbow, scarcely troubling herself to look at him before she spoke. To be

sure, none of them was worthy of any special mark of her favour. I scrutinised them quietly, and found them to be young men of the conventional Swedish type, handsome, blonde, broad-shouldered, and resembling one another like a flock of sheep. Only one among their number excited my curiosity; and he remained motionless in the background, never once opening his lips, and making no attempt to attract the Countess's attention, though his deep-set grey eyes kept an unceasing watch upon her. He was a decidedly remarkable person—remarkable in the midst of that flaxen-headed company on account of his black hair and dark complexion—still more remarkable by reason of his taciturnity and the grave, saturnine cast of his sharply-cut features. He interested me, and I fell to speculating about him, wondering who he was, and what it might be that he was watching for with that steady intent gaze, and why his neighbours seemed rather to avoid him. It was not a bad face, I concluded; only a very sad and stern one, with a touch of bitterness in its expression, such as a man might wear who had met with some great disappointment. I was still busy in forming conjectures with regard to him when there was a sudden breaking-up of the group by the doorway. The Countess had forsaken her station, and was moving slowly towards the improvised dancing-room, with her troop of satellites behind her.

My melancholy gentleman lingered for a few seconds, as if hesitating whether to follow the crowd or not. Then, much to my surprise, he took two strides in my direction, and accosted me, without preface of any kind.

"Well, you have been a very long time standing there," he said, speaking in English, with a strong accent. "You have already a great admiration for her; is it not so?"

"I think the Countess is the most beautiful woman I ever saw in my life," I answered, with all the superlative heartiness of youth.

He did not laugh. On the contrary, he frowned at me almost angrily. "That is to say a very great deal," he remarked.

"It's true though," I returned simply.

"How can it be true? There are a thousand—ten thousand women in the world as beautiful as she! No; it is not beauty that can hold a man so for half an hour—mouth open, eyes staring. No; what you say is great nonsense."

This outburst seemed to have the effect of recalling him to himself; for he broke off abruptly, and presently, with a slight shrug of his shoulders, "Pooh! you are a boy—you are only a boy," said he, and marched off without another word.

After this I felt a sensible diminution of interest in my new acquaintance. What had I done to be spoken to in that rude way? And what did he mean by calling me a boy? I have already said that I was young for my age, and I was quite conscious of being so at the time; but that did not make it the more pleasant to have one's attention so pointedly called to the circumstance. And here I may as well admit that the

Countess's manner of receiving me had wounded my vanity ever so slightly. My good-natured Stockholm friends had hitherto made something of a lion of me in a small way. They had accustomed me to look for little attentions, to which, of course, I was in no way entitled, save in my quality of an Englishman and a traveller; and this was the first occasion upon which I had been made to feel that my presence was really a matter of no importance to anybody. Now I am not, nor ever have been, a shy man; yet I confess that when I look back upon some of the audacious proceedings of my early life, I do not know whether to be most amused or ashamed. "Nothing venture, nothing have!" thought I to myself, and I walked off towards the sound of the music with a firm resolution to get speech of my lovely hostess.

I found her standing as before, with her little court about her, looking on at the whirling dancers. I waited my opportunity, and presently, taking advantage of a moment when she happened to be conversing with nobody, advanced, and said in my best French, "Will Madame la Comtesse deign to honour me with a waltz?"

She turned her blue eyes upon me with a momentary look of uncontrollable surprise, and then for one second I thought she was going to burst out laughing; but she was always courteous and kindly to all alike—I never knew her to be otherwise.

"I do not usually dance in my own house," she answered, in a very soft, gentle voice; "but if it will give you pleasure, I shall be happy to break through my rule for once."

Immediately afterwards we were revolving among the other couples, she and I. I danced, I believe, in such a manner as might be expected of a six-foot-three and eleven-stone-ten Englishman. I am afraid there never was much of the poetry of motion about my big body; but at least I did not lose step, or bump my partner, and being perfectly sound, wind and limb, nothing but the cessation of the music would have stopped me, once I was started, if the Countess herself had not at last shown signs of exhaustion.

"That will do," she said, disengaging herself, and leaning back against the wall with a somewhat increased colour and quickened breath. Then she looked at me, and this time laughed outright.

It was the most delightful, childish-sounding laughter I had ever listened to—quite low, but perfectly unaffected and irrepressible—the very embodiment of mirth. I did not know what she was laughing at, but there was something contagious in her merriment; so I began to laugh too, which made her worse. She offered me no explanation of her behaviour; but as soon as she had recovered herself, began to ask me a series of rapid questions. What had brought me to Sweden? Was I travelling only for my amusement? Were my parents still living? Had I brothers or sisters?

I was not a little flattered by the interest which she displayed in my plans and belongings, and by the unmistakable friendliness of her tone.

I gave her the fullest information, I remember; as to the subjects about which she inquired, relating how my long minority had placed me in possession of a larger sum of ready money than the improvement of my modest estate demanded, and how I was determined to see the world before settling down as a country squire. She heard me with a little quasi-maternal, benevolent air, approving my designs, and offering me a few sage counsels, which perhaps might have fallen more appropriately from the lips of a woman twice her age.

"Enjoy your liberty; make the most of it; it will not last. See everything; admire everything while you have the power: that will not last either. Nothing lasts long in this world—not even sorrow—

*Le temps emporte sur son aile
Et le printemps et l'hirondelle,
Et la vie et les jours perdus;
Tout s'en va comme la fumée,
L'espérance et la renommée——"*

She did not end the quotation. I fill up the blank now, sadly enough—

*Et moi qui vous ai tant aimée,
Et toi qui ne t'en souviens plus!*

To which of us do the words apply? Oh, surely not to me! No! If I said just now that I had forgotten, it was not true. I have not changed. Only I have grown old, and in the business and bustle of life I have learnt to live without her—which is what I thought at one time that I could never do. And she—do they remember where she is? Is their bliss clouded by memories of earthly sorrow? Or is she at rest and asleep, and shall we both wake and join hands when the last day comes? My rector tells me that I am not orthodox in my views of a future state; but I cannot believe in any happiness away from those whom we have loved here. My whole nature would have to be changed before I could be happy without her love; and if I am not to be myself any more, I would rather cease altogether.

But I am wandering too far from the Regerings-gatan, and my first conversation with the Countess Adelcrantz, in which no topics save such as related to this present world were treated of. We must have remained in the same spot where we had stopped dancing for some ten minutes, at the end of which time the short and simple annals of my life can have contained no further secrets for the Countess. I suppose it amused and pleased her to listen to my boyish talk.

Meanwhile it was impossible not to notice that we were the cynosure of all eyes. If my presence had been somewhat overlooked earlier in the evening, I had no cause to complain of not being sufficiently stared at now. The waltz had come to an end; the crowd in the room had increased; and I could not help observing the interrogatory glances that were directed at me from all quarters, the comments that were interchanged, and the evident general wonder who could be the young

stranger whom the fastidious Countess honoured with so large a share of her attention. I caught sight of Nordström, among the rest, with a most comical expression upon his countenance, indicative, as I read it, of mingled pride in his protégé and amazement at my assurance; and from the far background, my strange, dark-complexioned acquaintance was watching us with piercing grey eyes, under a lowering brow. I won't deny that I was a trifle elated by all this. I quite understood that I had only my own obscurity and the Countess's good nature to thank for the conspicuous marks of favour shown to me; but I was young enough to rather enjoy the sensation of making half a hundred people jealous at the same moment, and I believe that I actually had it in my mind to ask my companion for another dance, when all of a sudden I found that I was being graciously dismissed. Having doubtless had enough of me, she gave me my *congé* quite naturally, just as any royalty might have done; and although she did not take leave of me in so many words, she gave me clearly to understand that I was not expected to approach her again that evening.

"I receive every Tuesday and Thursday," she said. "Sometimes we dance, as you see; sometimes we have music or theatricals. Come whenever you are disposed, and have no better employment for your evening. Or, if you like to call upon me any afternoon, without ceremony, pray do so. I shall always be happy to see you."

And so, with a smile, and something between a bow and a nod, she turned away. I need hardly say that I now felt no temptation to linger in the dancing room. I had a few acquaintances among the assembled guests, and Nordström, who presently joined me, offered to introduce me to some new partners; but, after dancing with the divine Countess, I preferred going home to dropping to any lower social level, and without much difficulty I persuaded my friend to accompany me.

He treated me to a good deal of good-humoured raillery as we walked briskly away through the frosty night air. So nothing less than the most beautiful and the wealthiest lady in Sweden would do for me, eh? All my pretended modesty was but a cloak for exclusiveness, it appeared.

"Communicate to me the secret of your successes, you lucky fellow; I think you owe it to me to do as much as that."

I gravely told him the truth. I had been presented to a lady; I had asked for the honour of a dance with her—why not? If I had been thought worthy to enter her house, did it not follow that I was worthy to speak to her?

He seemed much struck with this conclusive reasoning. "Yes," he said musingly, "you are right—certainly, you are quite right. With women all is gained by audacity. You have more knowledge of the fair sex than I gave you credit for, my friend." And I am sure that his respect for me increased greatly from that hour.

Before we parted I took occasion to ask him whether he knew anything

of the mysterious individual whose eyes followed the Countess so persistently.

"Know him? To be sure I know him. That is Count Sten Adelcrantz, a cousin of our beautiful hostess's, or rather of her late husband's. He is a part of her establishment; he goes with her everywhere. People say——"

"What do people say?" I inquired, after waiting in vain for Nordström to fill up the hiatus.

"Oh, there are ill-natured people all over the world, you know. One hears their gossip, but one need not repeat it. Who can escape from slanderous tongues? I myself have had to suffer from them sometimes; but I have never allowed them to disturb my peace; nor, you may be sure, has the Countess. Poor Count Sten! there is no need to be a wizard to see that he is crazily in love with her; but what I say is, a favoured lover does not carry about such a dismal face. Eh? am I not right? For the matter of that, he is not the only one. The truth is, we are all in love with her."

I fear that this innocent speech caused me for the first time to mentally qualify poor Nordström as a coxcomb; while if it served in some degree to explain Count Sten's incivility to me, it did not assuredly increase my liking for him.

II.

When I look back upon that merry winter at Stockholm—upon the fiddling and dancing and sleighing, the gala-nights at the opera, the masked balls, the torch-light skating-parties, the prodigious dinners, beginning at three o'clock in the afternoon and ending I am afraid to say at what hour—when I look back upon these, and the other manifold diversions which lent wings to time, it seems to me that the Countess took part in them all. Perhaps I have forgotten the days which I spent apart from her; but indeed I don't think there were many such. And again, I should be puzzled to say how long a period of time elapsed, or through how many stages of progressive intimacy I had to pass, before I became her constant companion—before I learnt to love her with a devotion which has remained unaltered and undiminished throughout my life.

I would not have it supposed that she suspected the existence of my passion, or that I myself had the smallest expectation of touching an answering chord in her breast. My love for her resembled the adoration of one of those pages for his queen whose sighs have furnished the *motif* of many a mediæval ballad. The prize, you see, was too far beyond my reach; the fruit hung too high for me to cherish any dreams of plucking it. Her presence sufficed. It was enough for me to be permitted to be near her, to listen to her, to touch her hand at meeting and parting, to breathe the faint perfume that floated around her. And as for her, she was too much accustomed to homage to attach any great importance to

the acquisition of a fresh slave. Yet she certainly allowed me more privileges than were accorded to her own countrymen. She told me frankly that I pleased her; she always made me welcome; sometimes—and those were my best days—she would permit me to be her sole escort on one of those errands of charity which had made her name a household word among the poor folk, or would insist upon taking me to admire some of the lions of Stockholm; for, as she said, I was in danger of forgetting that there were other things to be seen in Sweden besides the inhabitants of the capital.

No one thought of questioning her right to roam the streets with a single attendant cavalier. Conventionality in such matters is not, that I am aware of, less strict in Stockholm than elsewhere; but of one thing I am certain, that if there were a Countess Adelcrantz in London, she might enjoy an equal immunity from criticism. There are some women so proud and pure that it is a waste of time to fling dirt at them. Those who try to do so only soil their own fingers, and can never hit their mark.

One day in particular stands out in my recollection from a host of others, as being the first on which she admitted me a step or two into her confidence, and raised me, as it were, for the time being, to something like a footing of equality with herself. We were in that part of the National Museum known as the Klädkammrar (clothes-room), whither she had taken me to inspect sundry relics of Sweden's departed kings and queens, which have been carefully preserved by their subjects and handed down from generation to generation. It made my heart ache to revisit this singular collection yesterday, and to see again Gustaf-Adolf's buff coat and lace collar, the blood-stained shirt which was sent home from Lützen, Charles XII.'s long blue coat and jack-boots, and poor Gustaf III.'s domino, with Ankarström's bullet-hole through it. So many of her words came back to me. The room seemed to be full of echoes of that soft voice, so long silent.

I confess that I didn't know much about the Vasas in those days. I had been educated at Eton and Oxford, and modern history was not my strong point. But the Countess, who was not only well-read, but had an enthusiastic love for the gallant race which had made her country great, related their several achievements to me as we passed their old clothes in review, and elicited from me a willing tribute of admiration. Of course she had a great deal to say, and many anecdotes not to be found in the history-books to relate of the great Gustavus, of the tenth and twelfth Charleses, and of other heroes, less world-renowned but scarcely less beloved; but, oddly enough, her chief sympathy seemed to be reserved for Queen Christina. Now of that sovereign I did happen to have read something; and what I knew of her by no means redounded to her credit. Was it not she who roamed scandalously about the world clad in male attire, who abjured the faith for which her father had died, who cursed and swore like a trooper, and whose private life was of the

most equivocal kind? And hadn't I seen in the gallery at Fontainebleau the stains of murdered Monaldeschi's blood? I ventured to enumerate some of the eccentricities of this royal termagant, and to express my surprise that anything in her character should have recommended itself to the Countess Adelcrantz's affection.

"Ah," she said, "you judge Queen Christina as foreigners do. We in Sweden have forgotten and forgiven her sins, which were rather against herself than against others, and remember only her great and generous heart, and her learning and wisdom, and the true love which she had for her country. You remember what old Oxenstjern said of her on his death-bed: 'Whatever may have been her faults, she will always be to me Gustaf's daughter.' That feeling remains with many of us yet. As for me, I have always admired her for her strength and independence. She dared to be herself and to live her own life; no one ever managed to coerce her. She would not marry her cousin to please either him or the States; but of her own free will she handed him over her crown and her kingdom, and sailed away to the south and liberty. Don't you think she was right? Is it not a thousand times better to be free than to be the most powerful sovereign in the world and wear fetters? Oh, there can be nothing to compare with freedom—perfect, absolute freedom! I wonder what it would be like!"

The Countess had seated herself beside a window, and was looking beyond the snow-covered streets and buildings and the frozen sea towards the horizon, with such a sad longing and almost despair in her beautiful eyes that my heart ached for her, and I exclaimed involuntarily—perhaps a little indiscreetly:—

"But surely, Countess, you are free, if ever anyone was!"

She did not answer me for a moment; her thoughts seemed to be far away. But presently she turned to me with her customary bright smile.

"I? Oh, I have my chains and fetters, like everybody else. You will have yours too, one day or another. Most people forge them for themselves, and have not much right to complain of being galled by them afterwards; but some have to wear the chains made by others for others; and that seems a little hard."

I could not doubt that she was alluding to herself. "I wish I knew what your chains were, that I might break them!" I cried.

"What, would you rob me of my estates?" she asked, laughing. "Would you have me abdicate, like Queen Christina, and wander away to foreign countries in search of adventures?"

"If it would make you happier to do so—yes," I answered unhesitatingly. I had a magnificent contempt for money and acres in those days.

"Well, but I am not a queen," she said, sighing; "nor am I a Christina either. I must bear my burden. And even if I could start on my travels, and see Rome and Naples and Athens, as I have some-

times dreamt of doing, where should I find a companion? Shall I tell you something that will surprise you? It is that I have no friends in the world—not one. Ah, I understand your look of incredulity. You think me exaggerative—possibly a little ungrateful. You are thinking that you have seen my friends gathered round me in hundreds. But in reality all these people are strangers to me; they don't know me, nor do I know them. They are fond of amusement and society, and so am I; and therefore we come together. But I should look in vain for a friend among them."

It was no more than natural that I should eagerly assure the Countess of the entire and eternal devotion of one, at least, among those who habitually frequented her society, and that, although I might not be worthy to aspire to the title of her friend, yet she might rely upon it that in an emergency no friend would serve her with more joy and pride than I. I daresay I got very red in the face, and stammered out my protestation clumsily enough; for the British tongue does not readily accommodate itself to the utterance of fine phrases; but I don't think she minded these ingenuous signs of confusion, and when I paused, she thanked me with a quiet grace that was all her own. She said many kind things; amongst others, that I was not to speak or think of her any more as though she were some superior kind of being to myself, and that she hoped our friendship would last long after I had left Stockholm and had entered upon the serious business of life in my own country. "In the meantime," she added, getting up with a laugh, "I must go home and prepare to receive twenty people at dinner. Already I hear the clanking of my chains."

But I doubted whether the chains to which she had referred were of that easy social kind. As I made my way towards the rooms which I had hired in the Gustaf-Adolf's Torg, musing as I went over all that had passed, I felt convinced that the Countess had a secret trouble, and, moreover, that Count Sten was in some way connected with it. That whimsical personage continued to be an enigma to me. I could not make out in what light he regarded the Countess, or was regarded by her. Her demeanour towards him was rather peculiar. She was always gentle with him; and I had observed that she studied his comfort and wishes in many small ways; but then she always seemed to breathe more freely in his absence, and when she looked at him there was something in her eyes which I could not fathom. Was it aversion? Sometimes I had fancied that it was fear; and indeed it might well be that; for Sten's behaviour had more than once led me to question his sanity. That he was enamoured of the Countess, and that he had been refused by her, I felt tolerably certain; but his reason for haunting her after the extinction of his hopes was not so clear. Nor was his manner by any means invariably that of a lover. It was a strange mixture of deference and defiance. Sometimes he would seem to abase himself before her in a sort of despair, and to take a delight in running her errands

with a needless ostentation which was evidently distressing to her; but there were other times—especially after one of her many admirers had been in the house—when he would address her in a tone of sharp authority which made me long to break my stick over his back. How he hated those handsome young suitors! Their name was legion; but I don't think he saw any safety in their number; and if they had not been the most forbearing of men, I believe he would have had a duel to fight every morning. I am free to confess that I did not greatly love them myself. I had no belief in their success; but I was jealous of them for all that; and it was not the less painful to me to look on at the wooing of others because I cherished no illusions as to my own chances.

It was perhaps a community of hopelessness that created some sort of bond between Count Sten and me. However that may be, it is certain that he became reconciled to my frequent visits after the first few days, and he even went out of his way, upon several occasions, to show me some civility. He had satisfied himself, I take it, that there was nothing to be feared from me; or, at least, almost satisfied himself; for every now and again—if, for instance, he chanced to encounter me returning with the Countess from one of our long rambles—he would attack me with a certain sarcastic savagery, trying his utmost to wound my feelings and make me lose my temper with him; an attempt in which, thanks to my phlegmatic British temperament, he never succeeded. "But you are a boy—you are only a boy!" he would generally conclude, using the same words which had so affronted me on the occasion of our first meeting. I don't know whether it was to convince me of the absurdity of my supposed pretensions, or to still some uneasiness of his own, that he reiterated this phrase so often; but it usually had the effect of restoring him to equanimity.

At such times as Count Sten was not in one of his black moods, he was pleasant company enough. He had read a great deal; he had got together a valuable library on the second floor of his cousin's house, which was given up to his use; he could converse well upon a wide range of subjects. But his favourite study was genealogy. Upon this topic he would descant as long as you would listen to him; he had the pedigree of every noble family in Europe at his 'fingers' ends; and to hear him talk, you would have fancied that the house of Adelcrantz was at the head of them all. Indeed I have very little doubt that such was his honest conviction. His pride of birth amounted to a mania. I believe he thought that there was no crowned head in the world but would be honoured by his notice. The Vasas themselves were but men of yesterday in comparison with his family; and as for the reigning dynasty, he alluded to it with the most superb contempt, and could never be persuaded to make his bow at Court. It was his duty to respect his country's choice: but an Adelcrantz do homage to a Bernadotte! No, indeed! He often showed me his family tree, which lost itself in I forget what fabulous mists of antiquity, and was wont to

boast that it recorded no single instance of a misalliance. His own mother, he told me, was an Italian marchesina: hence his darkness of complexion.

I can see him now pacing up and down that long upper room, a tall picturesque figure in his black velvet coat and high boots. I used to smoke my pipe while he entertained me, by the hour together, with the sayings and doings of some departed Adelerantz; but if I tentatively led the conversation up to modern times, and tried to elicit some information as to the lady who now ruled over the estates of Count Sten's ancestors, his communicativeness would abruptly cease, and as often as not he would stride to the door, hold it open, and send me about my business without any apology whatever.

III.

It was in the month of February, I think, after the end of the Carnival season, that the Countess determined to spend a week in her Dalecarlian domains, and invited a number of her friends to accompany her thither. The invitation was readily accepted on all sides; for there was little doing in Stockholm now that dancing had been put a stop to for a few weeks; and, as Nordström, who, to his great joy, had been included among the bidden guests, remarked, it was not every day that one got the chance of combining sport with society and royal fare. For my part, I was enchanted with the prospect of a change from town life, and of seeing something of Swedish scenery in winter.

We left the city with the first grey light of a frosty morning, and were soon well on our way—a large and merry party of us—waking the echoes far and wide with loud voices and laughter and the ringing of sledge-bells, as we sped swiftly over the snow. The warmest and costliest of furs protected us against the cold; relays of post-horses were waiting for us at every stage, where also sundry hot drinks were in readiness for those who were inclined that way. Everything had been thought of; everything went smoothly; it was the perfection of winter travelling. And by good luck the weather proved still; so that one could enjoy the charm of that solemn white landscape without fear of frost-bites.

To me it was all novel and delightful. The keen air; the pale sunlight upon the distant hills; the pine trees weighed down by their load of snow; the bare branches and twigs seen through a casing of the clearest crystal; the long line of sledges, with their galloping horses and trailing furs—all these things so filled me with exhilaration that, if I had not been an Englishman and habituated to self-control, I must have shouted and sung like Nordström, who was letting off his superfluous spirits by means of a succession of discordant *jodels*, varied by snatches of peasant ditties, which, to judge by the laughter they provoked, must have been of a most facetious order. We slept that night at Sala, and on the next day entered the wilder and more mountainous

district for which we were bound. There was much talk of wolves as we approached the Dalecarlian forests—those marauders having been reported to have lately increased in numbers to an alarming extent—but we saw nothing of them, and I don't think any of us felt their absence as much of a deprivation. We didn't care about wolves; what we wanted was to get a shot at a bear; and we had been promised that a bear-hunt should be organised for us, although the season was not very favourable to our chances of success.

The Countess's castle—or rather country-house; for the great rambling building had little pretension to a more ambitious title—stood on a hillside in the neighbourhood of Rättvik, looking down upon the great Siljan Sjö. It was a fine situation, and they told me that the country all round was lovely in summer-time; but I can't fancy any improvement on those wild scenes as I saw them, sheeted in snow, fantastic with wreathed drifts and hanging icicles; a sparkling fairy-land by day, but more enchanting still by night, when the moon shone down upon the frozen lake, and all heights and depths seemed doubled. Almost every evening we marched down to the lake in a long procession, the servants bearing flaming torches, and danced skating quadrilles to the inspiring strains of some musicians who had been brought from Stockholm for that purpose. The peasants—stalwart giants in knee-breeches and white stockings and short-waisted blue coats with skirts reaching more than half-way down the leg—used to assemble at a respectful distance and watch us. The Countess never failed to take an opportunity of speaking to them. She knew them all by name, and remembered their troubles and ailments and family affairs without any need of prompting. They were a sturdy, independent race, not caring much for strangers nor desirous of being studied by them; but they were ready to do anything for their beautiful lady; and it was to please her that some of them consented to come up to the castle, one evening, and favour us with a sight of their national dances and a hearing of their national songs.

That is one among the many pictures which hang in the gallery of my memory. The long narrow hall, cleared of its furniture, decorated with reindeer and elk antlers, and lighted by sconces and by a great brass chandelier of antique form; the Countess and her guests gathered, some sitting, some standing, at the upper end of the room; the country people, in their quaint costumes, separated from them by a wide intervening space, and the grey-haired major-domo, a fussy and important personage, coming and going between the two groups—it might be yesterday, instead of a quarter of a century ago, that I saw it all. The peasants were a little shy and defiant at first—I fancy they did not much relish the notion of being made an exhibition of—but the bashfulness of rustics is less obstinate than that of town-folk, and they soon warmed to their work. I daresay a constant and liberal supply of refreshments contributed not a little towards setting them at their ease. Their singing was really excellent, and some of their melodies exceedingly plaintive

and sweet, while as for their dancing, it made up in vigour and agility what it lacked in grace. One of their number, a strapping young yellow-bearded fellow, elicited great applause from the audience by an improvised ballad of inordinate length, which my knowledge of Swedish did not enable me to follow, but which, as I was given to understand, included a spirited eulogy of the Countess, together with a sly hit or two at certain peculiarities in the dress and persons of her friends which had tickled the native sense of humour. And so everything passed off well, and the evening might have been counted a thoroughly successful one, but for an untoward incident which marred its conclusion.

We had all moved down to the lower end of the hall, to thank our entertainers and wish them good-night, when the yellow-bearded improvisatore, flushed by his previous success, and also, I am afraid, by his too frequent attentions to the neighbouring tankard, must needs take it into his head to step forward and make a speech. He said it had done all their hearts good to see the Countess amongst them once more, looking so well, and more beautiful than ever. She could not come too often, nor stay too long; and for his part, he wished there were no such things as great cities in the world, so that every noble might live in his own home and among his own people, and breathe the pure country air, and follow the field-sports of his fathers—which surely must be a more happy and wholesome lot than to dwell in a crowded street, with your neighbours on either side driving your elbows into your ribs, so to speak. But, continued this amiable numskull, it was easy to understand that the solitude of the long winter might frighten a lady away from their lakes and mountains. There must be a master as well as a mistress in the house before all could go well, and the good old times come back again. Now, God be praised! there was no lack of handsome and noble gentlemen in Sweden: he saw before him as goodly a company as the eyes of man could wish to rest upon. Let the Countess make her choice, and it would be a good day for all of them when they were bidden to dance at her wedding.

The peroration was not a happy one; but obviously the only thing to be done was to ignore it, and to get rid of the too fluent speaker and his companions as quickly as might be. Such, no doubt, was the opinion of the Countess, who was not easily put out of countenance; but unfortunately there was another person present who did not take so lenient a view of the offender's conduct. Hardly were the words spoken before Count Sten strode forward, his face livid and his eyes blazing.

"You hound!" he shouted, gripping the man by the shoulder, and shaking him violently. He seemed to be beside himself with passion, and to have lost all control over his actions.

"Sten! Sten!" cried the Countess, in a low, pleading voice; but he never heeded her. He was choking with rage; his voice had sunk to a hoarse whisper.

"Hans Lund, you are dismissed. A year's rent shall be paid to you

to-morrow. Go! Take yourselves away out of the country, you and yours, and never let your faces be seen here again, or it shall be the worse for you."

The man shook off his assailant with one jerk of his broad shoulders, and stared him in the face contemptuously. "The worse for me! It shall be the worse for you if you dare to lay hands upon me again, though you are a noble, and I only a poor farmer. After all, you are not what you seem, perhaps; for who ever heard of a black Adelcrantz? But Adelcrantz or no Adelcrantz, you can't harm me; I take no dismissal except from my gracious lady. Madam, are my wife and children to be turned out of doors to please this gentleman?"

"No, no," answered the Countess, hurriedly; "it is all a misunderstanding."

"The man shall go!" thundered Count Sten.

"He must not go," returned the Countess. She was as pale as Sten himself, and there was a tremor in her voice; but she spoke clearly enough. "I am mistress here," she said.

All of a sudden a total change came over Sten's countenance and attitude. His anger was gone; his head sank on his breast; his clenched fingers relaxed. "Yes," he murmured in a tone of intense bitterness; "you are mistress. It is yours to command, and mine to obey. Is it your will that I shall ask pardon of this dog?"

The Countess made no audible reply; but I was standing close behind her, and I heard her whisper, "How can you be so cruel? Don't humiliate me before them all!"

Sten neither raised his eyes from the ground nor spoke; but turned on his heel and walked away, his footsteps echoing through the silence. Presently the heavy door closed with a crash, and he was gone.

"An old grievance," muttered Nordström in my ear. "He thinks he ought to have been the heir. He was the next male in succession after the old Count died, and the estates have never been held by a woman before."

Whatever may have been the cause of Sten's outbreak, its effect was to spoil the enjoyment of two, at least, of the party during the remainder of our sojourn at Rättvik. Of course no further allusion was made to the episode—indeed, the Countess's serenity had only been outwardly disturbed for a few seconds, and I daresay no one but myself suspected that her subsequent high spirits were assumed; but I, who could not choose but watch her constantly, detected a worn, harassed look that came over her face at intervals, and a suspicion of circles beneath her eyes which told me that black care was not far away. And when she was unhappy, how could I be anything else? Sten reappeared the next morning, looking neither more grim nor less so than of custom; and if he felt any shame at having forgotten himself in public, he at all events exhibited none.

We had our bear-hunt—a moderate success, resulting in the death of

one shaggy monster—the only one who showed himself. Bruin never came near the spot where I was posted. It was to Nordström that the honours of the day fell, and I am sure no one who saw his gleeful face afterwards could have grudged them to him. As for me, I was a little out of spirits, and did not care so much about distinguishing myself in the chase as I had done a few days before; though, to be sure, I should have liked well enough to have taken home a bearskin to show to my neighbours in England.

After all, it is in my possession at the present day, that same skin. It lies in the gun-room, and is almost as glossy as on that morning when my good Nordström, who had had it cured and mounted, brought it to my rooms and insisted upon my accepting it—as a memento of my visit to Dalecarlia, he said. I did not need anything to remind me of that week; but I took the gift, seeing that he would be really hurt if I refused; and it was the more valuable to me because it was a splendid skin, and I knew that it must have cost the good fellow a pang to part with it. Poor old Nordström! how have time and the world dealt with him, I wonder? It is odd to think that, if he is living now, he must be grey-headed and wrinkled like myself. Should I know him if I were to meet him in the street to-morrow? I doubt he wouldn't recognise me.

IV.

In Sweden, as in most northern latitudes, the transition from winter to summer is an abrupt one. To us in Stockholm the approaching change manifested itself by a week of the most comfortless weather; a week of gales and cold rain and alternating frosts and thaws; a week which upset the health of most people and tried the temper of all. Then, almost before we had realised that the ice was breaking up in earnest and the snow beginning to melt, the sun burst forth in his strength, the meadows were covered with wild flowers, the trees were sprinkled with touches of bright green, birds were singing in every wood and thicket, and the spring was upon us.

At that blithe season there was no lighter heart in all Sweden than mine; for I had declared my love to the Countess, and—she had not dismissed me. In what precise words I disburdened my heart of its secret signifies little. If I could recall them, and were inclined to set them down, they would doubtless make but a poor show on paper; but as a matter of fact, my memory upon that point is a complete blank. I no more know what I said than I can account for the sudden and ungovernable impulse which forced me to speak, against my better judgment, and in some sort against my will. I believe I was in a terrible state of agitation and alarm, dreading the worst, unable to surmise what might be the consequences of my rashness, yet no less unable to keep silence any longer. It would not have surprised me if she had ordered me out of her house, or if she had laughed me to scorn, or if she had upbraided me with taking an unworthy advantage of her kindness, and

had intimated that our acquaintance must end then and there. But she did none of these things. She heard me without comment or interruption of any kind, and answered me very kindly and quietly. It was evening, and she was sitting in a low chair before the wood fire; her eyes fixed upon the leaping flames. All the time she was talking to me, she kept on twisting and turning the rings on her slim fingers in a way that she had. She reminded me of that day at the Klädskammar when she had told me that she had not friend in the world. "You have been my friend for several months now; I don't want to lose you. Let us try to forget what has just passed. I believe that you are sincere—at least, I believe that you are a little in love with me now; what you may be a year hence is another matter—but you have been dreaming of impossibilities. If there were no other reason to keep you from speaking to me again as you did just now, the difference in our ages would be a sufficient one."

"I am a year older than you," I cried eagerly. She laughed, and said that years were not the true measure of age. "Your life is only just beginning; mine is to all intents and purposes over. I know exactly what lies before me between now and the churchyard; your future is still your own, and will be what you may choose to make it. Oh, I assure you I am an old woman, and you—you are a very young man."

I don't think I said much more at the time. I was not beseeching the Countess to marry me, nor dreaming of such a thing. I had told her that I loved her because silence was no longer possible to me, and she was not offended. I asked for nothing more.

But from that day forth there came a total change over the nature of our intercourse. It could hardly be otherwise. The common possession of that secret created a new link between us, and we were now something more than friends—though *what* we were I can't attempt to define. Not lovers, assuredly. Yet, as the weeks went on, it did come to pass that something very like lovers' quarrels and lovers' reconciliations occurred between us. For, alas! I had not, in truth, all the humility I laid claim to, and when a sudden fit of jealousy attacked me I could not, or at all events did not, always conceal it. She was very patient and forbearing with me at such times, affecting not to notice my boyish petulance, yet putting herself to pains in numberless little ways to overcome it; and I could not but perceive that she was glad when I was pleased, and sorry when I was sad.

Once only were we in danger of a serious difference, and then, indeed, she had every reason to be angry with my impertinence. I have said that the Countess was above slander's reach, but I have recorded also a hint of Nordström's to the effect that certain people had put their own base construction upon the rather peculiar position which Count Sten occupied in her household. Whispers, backbiters there must always be everywhere—men and women whose thoughts, like their lives, are

pitched in a low key; who, being unable to understand innocence, swear loudly that there is no such thing, and drown all dissentient voices in a chorus of laughter. The world, I think, generally joins in the laugh from fear of being thought simple. Such persons as these had a ready explanation of Count Sten's residence under his cousin's roof. "An ambitious woman, who had no fancy for a husband's authority," said they, with a shrug and a wink. "A jealous lover, who could not bring himself to let his mistress out of his sight—nay, rather, a discarded lover who could not be turned away lest awkward revelations should ensue"—Wasn't the whole thing as clear as mud? Now it fell out that, in the early days of June, a side-wind wafted these ugly mutterings for the first time to my ears, and I had not—I say it with shame—enough of right contempt for their source to despise them entirely. I allowed them to settle in my mind and rankle there; I kept asking myself what was the meaning of that authority over the Countess's actions which Sten often arrogated to himself; in a word, I brooded and fretted over the subject till she noticed that something was wrong with me, and asked me what was the matter. And then I told her. No sooner were the words uttered than I would have given anything to have held my tongue. Good, kind, and gentle as she was, she had an undoubted power of frightening those who offended her, and my first glance at her face showed me that I had overstepped the limits of that licence to which she had so graciously accustomed me. She did not, however, speak angrily, she only said, in rather cold accents—

"It is a poor kind of friend who can listen to such things and repeat them."

Of course I cast myself at her feet immediately, and implored pardon. I assured her that I had never given even an instant's credence to those abominable lies—God forbid that I should do so! But it had grieved me that there should be so much as a shadow of pretext for their utterance—that any mystery should hang over a matter which probably admitted of the simplest explanation. I could not bear to hear her attacked and to be unable to give her cowardly assailants the lie direct.

"In short," said she, interrupting me, "you want me to give you information for which you have no right to ask, and which I am surely entitled to withhold. I shall not gratify your curiosity, now or at any future time: it is better that you should know that at once. I wish I had been able to make you trust me a little more, but if you cannot it is not your fault, and I do not blame you. Why, after all, should you be different from the rest of the world?"

I could say no more. It was true that I wanted that information; but it was also true that, as she said, I had no right to demand it; and as for trusting her, why, I believed then, as I believe now, that no nobler or purer woman ever breathed. And so by degrees the shadow of this passing cloud vanished, and our mutual confidence was re-established.

In the meantime, the cause of its temporary disturbance was himself beginning to show symptoms of disquietude. Count Sten was no longer a friend of mine. When we met, he scowled at me silently, or, if he spoke, it was only to ask me how much longer I proposed to remain in Sweden, or whether, perchance, I had formed some design of spending the rest of my life there. His old formula of "You are a boy—you are only a boy!" was repeated less frequently, and pronounced, as it seemed to me, with a new inflexion of anxiety—as though it had dawned upon him that even boys might be formidable under some circumstances. Once or twice he went so far as to tell me that it was high time I should make myself acquainted with other countries, and to hint darkly at certain perils which might be in store for those who outstayed their welcome. I need hardly say that I was not much alarmed by such veiled threats. Indeed, I cared little enough for Sten's hostility or its possible developments, and so long as he left the Countess in peace he was heartily welcome to bully me. Nevertheless, I admit that I rejoiced greatly when some business connected with an unproductive fief of his in Finmark called him away from Stockholm upon a three weeks' visit to that remote province. I rejoiced to be rid of him on my own score; but I rejoiced the more because his absence brought such evident relief to my dear Countess. Whatever might be the mystery of her connection with him—and that there was some mystery she had as good as admitted—it was plainly irksome to her, and once he was gone she seemed to breathe a freer air.

The three weeks that followed were the best and happiest time of all my life. I haven't the heart to write much about them now. During these last few days I have been back to all the old places. I have seen again the dusky woods of Ulriksdal and the island palace of Drottningholm, and lonely Svartsjö, and all those creeks and inlets of the sea-girt Djurgård, which might be hundreds of miles away from any habitation of man were it not for the passage of an occasional tiny steamer, churning up the glassy water and sending a diminutive swell to set the bulrushes swaying by the bank. I have been to the Haga Park, too, where we used to ride, and to the beautiful cemetery where we sometimes wandered, and where she now lies at rest. I don't think there is an hour of that wondrous summer season of ceaseless daylight that has not come back to me in all its old freshness; but what I cannot quite remember is when and how I first dared to hope that she cared for me as I cared for her. I knew it while as yet I had not had the presumption to say to myself that it could be so; I knew it, though no word or hint of love had passed between us, and though my consciousness of her superiority was as strong as ever it had been. I do not speak of her superiority of rank and fortune, for upon these accidental adjuncts I did not waste a thought, but of her superiority to me as a human being. I could not be, nor approach to being, her equal, but I think that if matters had gone otherwise I might, through living with her, have

turned out a very different man from what I am to-day. I am as dull and commonplace a fellow as need be—we have never been noted for brains in our family, and the circumstances of my later life have fostered my inborn tendencies—but I suppose that in all of us there lurks a higher self, a germ of possible higher existence; and it was this latent good that the Countess had the gift of evoking. Looking back upon the past with the sober eyes of a quinquagenarian, I still feel convinced that no glamour of love misled me, and that all who were brought into contact with her owned the influence I have alluded to in a greater or less degree. So I say that she was infinitely above me. Yet if, in spite of all, it could be that she loved me, was I to let a sense of my unworthiness keep me for ever apart from her? I was beginning to put this question to myself in a hesitating, wondering sort of way, when the last sands in the hour-glass of my bliss—which had only been set to mark a period of three weeks—ran out, and brought Count Sten back to Stockholm.

He returned in the blackest of black humours. To me, when we met, he vouchsafed no sort of recognition except a piercing look, and ignoring my outstretched hand, whisked round and turned his back upon me. I walked away, laughing. What did it matter? Let him do his worst, he could not harm me much now, I thought. Alas! I was soon to learn that his power was greater than I had supposed.

Presenting myself next morning in the Regerings-gatan as usual, I was met with the startling news that the Countess had left Stockholm. Gone! and without a word! I could hardly believe my ears. The fat porter who stood in the half-open doorway saw my consternation and surveyed me with good-natured pity. "Yes," he said, the Countess had departed unexpectedly for her villa in the island of Gotland; Count Sten had accompanied her. He could not tell whether the family would return to Stockholm before proceeding to Dalecarlia for the remainder of the summer; but in all probability not. No message had been left for me.

My resolution was soon taken. I acted upon the impulse of the moment; though, if I had taken time for consideration, I should most likely have adopted no other course. That same night the little steamer which plies between Wisby and the mainland was bearing me past the wooded shores of Lake Mälär towards the Södertelje Canal and the Baltic. Come what might of it, thought I, there should now be an end and a finish of all uncertainty.

Little Gotland, rising in mid-Baltic with abrupt white cliffs, and sunny vineyards and mulberry gardens, might, by a stretch of analogy, be likened to a Swedish Capri, as Stockholm has sometimes been styled the Venice of the North. It has a wonderfully mild climate, considering its latitude, and not a few natural beauties of an unambitious order. The Countess used often to talk to me about this island, so little visited

now-a-days, so famous in mediæval times, when Wisby, its chief town, was the emporium of the great Oriental trade; when its streets were thronged by burghers in costly attire, and its churches were rich with gold and jewels; when its population exceeded by three times its present figure, and its merchants were powerful enough to declare their independence of Sweden. The Wisby of to-day is a quiet, sleepy old place, overshadowed by grey ruins, and encircled by the same battlemented walls which kept more than one besieger at bay before the fatal year of 1361, when Waldemar of Denmark sacked the place and carried off its treasures. The space inclosed by them is wide enough, in these days, to admit of many a garden and shady grass-plot between the little detached white houses. There are public promenades too, and an unpretending bathing establishment, and a few villas dotted about the heights above the town.

All these things I saw with half-conscious eyes as I stepped on shore and followed the white-headed lad who volunteered to carry my portmanteau up to the inn. I was beginning, I must confess, to have doubts as to the wisdom of the decisive step which I had taken. What right, after all, had I to dog the Countess's footsteps in this fashion? And might I not be made to look supremely foolish if it should turn out that she had written to me from Wisby to announce her sudden departure, and its reason; and if a letter to that effect were even now being delivered at my Stockholm lodgings? Chewing the cud of these disturbing reflections, I set out to stroll through the streets of the old town; for it was early morning, and some hours must yet elapse before I could with any propriety make my way into the Countess's presence. I visited, I am afraid to say how many ruined churches—St. Hans, St. Lars, St. Drotten, and a host of other oddly-named saints—ending with the unique Helge Ands Kyrka, a curious structure, built in such a manner as to form two churches, one above the other, with a large circular opening enabling those aloft to take part in a service conducted beneath them. I was standing on the verge of this aperture—the original use of which is a puzzle to antiquaries, I am told—with my eyes staring absently at the moss-grown pavement below, and my thoughts away in the clouds, when on a sudden my arm was gripped above the elbow, I was forced as nearly as possible over the brink; then thrown back with such violence that I reeled against the crumbling wall behind me, and Sten Adelcrantz's voice cried out—

"So I have caught you! You are in my power! Do you understand?—in my power! A moment ago I could have dashed your cursed life out of your body, and who would have been the wiser? A fall—an accident—what? So imprudent, these English travellers! Am I going to spare you? I don't know. Are you afraid, hey?—are you afraid?"

Well, I don't say but that I might have been a little afraid—for the man's eyes were blazing like a wild beast's, and his manner and speech

were those of a raving madman—if his ridiculous theatrical ways had not made me too angry for fear.

"You must be a great fool," I said, "to suppose that you can frighten me in that way. I flatter myself I am as good a man as you are, and if you think you can throw me down, you had better come on and try."

"No," he answered, folding his arms, and leaning back against the ivy-covered masonry; "you are not worth so much trouble." Go! I give you your life and your liberty. Make use of it; and take yourself away out of Gotland, quickly."

"Really," said I, pulling off my hat, and making him a fine bow, "you are very kind; but I assure you I have not the least intention of leaving Gotland for some time to come."

"And I will make bold to predict that you leave this evening. You young puppy!" he shouted, with a sudden return of fury, "do you think I do not know what has brought you here? You—a low-born foreigner—a man of no nobility at all—to marry a Countess Adelorantz! Ha, ha! you almost make me laugh. Go! you have already done enough mischief. Go! curse you——"

The remainder of Count Sten's apostrophe must be left blank. Where he had picked up his knowledge of British expletives I can't imagine; but never from the mouth of any Thames bargee have I heard worse language, and somehow, his strong accent and grotesque gestures added more of horror than of absurdity to his vehement speech.

"I do not see that you will do much good by exciting yourself like this," I remarked at length. "I shall not take my dismissal from you, you know."

"Take it from her own lips then—to me it is all one! She is at home, and she will receive you—oh, yes! I have no doubt at all that she will receive you. Shall I show you the way?"

But I did not need to be shown the way. The Countess's villa had been pointed out to me from the deck of the steamer; and besides, I could have discovered it, without any assistance, from having heard her describe its position so often. I scrambled down the rough staircase, Sten making no effort to follow me, and was soon breasting the hillside, glad enough to have got away without a scuffle, yet full of dread as to what might still be before me.

I found her in a sunny, windy garden, pacing slowly up and down a kind of shrubbery which bordered the cliff. She did not seem astonished to see me; but her smooth forehead drew itself up into anxious lines, and when I approached her I could see that she had been crying.

"Oh! why have you come?" she exclaimed.

"I have come," I answered, "to hear what you are going to do with my life. You know that it belongs to you, and always will, whether you send me away or not. Oh, dear Countess! no one will ever love you as much as I do. I don't pretend to be your equal, though—if that were of any consequence—I am not low-born, as he says——"

"As who says? Have you seen Sten?"

"Yes, just now, among the ruins."

"You have seen him! What did he tell you?"

"He told me nothing. He cursed me, and ordered me off; and I answered that I would not take my dismissal from him."

"Ah, poor fellow! poor fellow!" she murmured sadly, looking away from me at the blue sea far beneath her.

"What—do you pity him?" I cried, "and have you no pity for me? Tell me, Countess, what is the meaning of it all? What is this mystery?"

"I can't explain," she answered quietly. "I am very sorry for you, but I can't explain."

"Then I will find out for myself," I returned, with some heat. "One thing is certain—that sullen scoundrel is at the bottom of it all."

"No, no—poor Sten!—it is not his fault—you don't understand. It is not possible for me to marry you, or anybody. Why would you not believe when I told you so long ago? We might have been friends, but that is all over now, and you must go away, and I shall never see you again." And then, all of a sudden, she burst into tears.

I can't tell how it came about that I was holding her in my arms and kissing her golden curls, while her face was buried on my shoulder. It only lasted a moment. She dragged herself away from me, and stood leaning against the back of a stone bench, her breath coming in short gasps.

"For heaven's sake, leave me! If he finds us like this, some misfortune will happen. Good-bye—good-bye! I thank you from my heart for your love—I shall never forget you—I shall never love anyone but you—but we must not meet again after this. Now go, before he comes back."

Of course I did not go. Was it likely that I should go when I had just heard from her own lips that she loved me? Was it likely that I should allow anything to part us after such a confession as that? Yet, after all, I failed. I remained a long time in the garden there, questioning, urging, entreating; but nothing availed. I could obtain no more from her than an assurance that she could not marry; that neither she nor anyone living was to blame; and finally, after much pressure, a reluctant admission that she might conceivably, at some future date, be free.

"But that is very unlikely ever to happen," she added; "and besides, we ought not to wish for it. It could only be if—if—but I must not tell you. It is a chance, a remote chance—that is all. Do not think any more about it."

I clung, however, to this faint hope, in default of a better. I made her promise that, should the event she had alluded to ever arise, she would send for me at once. I gave her my address in England, and entreated her to write to me sometimes, but that she would not do. It was

better not, she said. And so we parted; and Sten's prediction was fulfilled, for the same steamer which had brought me to Gotland in the morning took me back at night.

I never saw or heard from her again; her secret is a secret to me still. Perhaps it is because I am a somewhat dull man that I have failed to hit upon any plausible key to the enigma; but though I have pondered the matter through many an idle day and sleepless night, I have never been able to guess at the nature of her hidden bonds; and it is a long time now since I gave up trying to do so. For my Countess has been dead and at rest these twenty years and more; and since no earthly troubles of hers can vex her longer, why should I harp upon them? Whatever they may have been, they would not, if they were known, cast any discredit upon her memory: of that I am sure.

For two years I heard of her from Nordström, who, like the good fellow that he was, kept up a constant correspondence with me, though I never let him into the secret of my hopeless love. Then, one morning, came a sorrowful letter telling me of her sudden death. It was a chill taken on returning home after a ball that killed her, Nordström said. Her illness lasted barely twenty-four hours; and while the doctors were still assuring anxious inquirers that there was no danger, she was passing quietly away.

I never allow my thoughts to dwell much upon that time. Some people, I suppose, would have had a brain fever; but I had not such luck. I did not fall ill for a single day; I went about my ordinary occupations as usual, and I doubt whether anyone noticed a change in me, unless it were my old hunter, Cronstadt. He might have broken my neck if he had liked; but ours is not a hard country, and the old horse was a first-rate fencer, and so nothing worse nor better befell me than a sousing in the Blackwater.

At a farmers' club dinner, the other day, some one was good enough to propose my health. "Our worthy and esteemed county member," says he, "is one of those men of whom England is justly proud—which, I am sorry to add, gentlemen, that there is not a many of them left in these bad times. A liberal landlord, a hospitable host, a steady, though unobtrusive supporter of his party in Parliament," &c. &c. Well, yes; I think I may say that I have been unobtrusive. "But," continues this wag, "we have one grudge against our respected friend, and it is a long-standing one. He has not done his dooty by the ladies—I say he has not done his dooty by the fair sex. Now, gentlemen, I hope I may be permitted, in this connection, to quote a good old English proverb—namely, 'It is never too late to mend.'" Whereat we have much cheering and laughter.

I have had to submit to this kind of thing for such a number of years now that it no longer annoys me in the least. At first I used to jump up quite red and flustered, regretting that my friend Mr. Turnip-tops should have thought fit to bring forward matters of purely domestic

interest at a public meeting ; but now-a-days I am charmingly jocular on the subject of single blessedness, and the way in which I poke fun at certain of my neighbours who are more blessed with sons and daughters than with means to support them is so exquisitely witty that my audience laugh themselves purple in the face over it regularly once a year. Would they laugh, I wonder, if the true reason of my celibacy were made known to them ? Possibly not ; for I have always held that there exists deep down in the bucolic mind an unsuspected fund of sentiment, together with an obstinate tenacity of all things—love among the rest. Perhaps I am myself an example of the truth of what I maintain. It may be stupidity, it may be a defective imagination that has kept me so doggedly faithful to my ideal ; but the fact remains that my life has held but one romance, and that I have been true to it.

Why, then, should I not hug myself in a complacent self-respect ? Why have I had to admit to myself over and over again, during these last days, that I have not come out an altogether triumphant victor from my long contest with that insidious old adversary, Time ? I pace the old streets ; I wander along the well-remembered paths and alleys ; I gaze at the familiar, unchanged prospects. I am the same man, with the same heart, who dwelt in this city five and twenty years ago—

But yet I know, where'er I go,
That there hath pass'd away a glory from the earth.

I suppose it all means—to wind up a long story—that I have lost my youth. My youth ; but not my love. No ; I acknowledge, with a thankful and humble heart, that neither time nor solitude has been able to rob me of that. It has been mine in the past ; it is mine in the present ; it will be mine, as I believe, in the glad future, when my spirit shall rush to claim it upon the other side of the grave.

V.

Two days later.—I have seen Nordström. I picked him out directly from among some two or three hundred people who were drinking coffee and listening to the band at the Strömparterre last night ; and though he did not recognise me with quite equal readiness, I had no reason to grumble at my welcome when once I had explained who I was. Nothing would satisfy him but that I should go home to supper with him, and make the acquaintance of his wife, a comely, middle-aged lady, and his two pretty daughters. Nordström himself has grown stout, and is as grey as I am. After supper he led me to his smoking-room to enjoy, as he said, a good cigar and a good talk over old times ; and then it was that I took occasion to ask him casually whether he knew anything of Sten Adelcrantz.

"Ah, the poor fellow !" he said. "Did you never hear ? He died, raving mad, in an asylum long ago. His was a sad story," Nordström

added, after a pause. "He never recovered the shock of our poor Countess's death, and only survived her by a few months."

I hardly know what impelled me to open my lips to this kindly, garrulous Swede upon a subject which I have hitherto kept secret and sacred; perhaps it was meeting some one who had known her, and hearing her name mentioned after so long an interval; perhaps it was because, ever since I have been in Stockholm, I have experienced something of the Ancient Mariner's craving to unfold my tale to a listener—any listener. At all events I made a clean breast of it; and, as matters turned out, I was thankful that I had done so. For when he heard me to the end, and had expressed a great deal of kind sympathy with me and interest in my story, he said:—

"Well, now you have had confidence in me; and in return I will tell you something that I have never mentioned to anyone before—not even to my wife. You must know that I was very nearly the last man who saw Sten Adelerantz in his senses. It was a few nights after the Countess's death that I found him striding up and down the Carl XII.'s Torg, bareheaded, throwing his arms about, and muttering to himself in a sort of frenzy. It was a bitter cold night, and I was afraid of what might happen if I were to leave him alone there; so I persuaded him to come back to my rooms with me, and there, after a time, he became a little calmer, and told me some things which astonished me very much. I don't suppose he would ever have spoken so openly if he had been quite himself; but he was in great agitation, accusing himself of having murdered his cousin, and I don't know what besides; and all through his statement he kept appealing to me to say whether he had not been right, and whether anyone, placed as he was, could have acted differently. It made me very sorry to hear him. It would take too long to repeat all that he told me in his own words; but, summed up, it came to this. Old Count Adelerantz, who died a widower and childless some time in the beginning of the century, bequeathed all his estates to his nearest rightful heir. No one questioned that this was his nephew, Count Carl, who accordingly entered upon his inheritance. Many years afterwards this Count Carl, grown old and half silly, took it into his head to marry the lady whom we knew—(she was forced into the match by her friends and consented most unwillingly, poor thing!)—and some years after that again, his second cousin Sten accidentally came into possession of the clearest proof of Carl's illegitimacy. So there was no doubt but that, under his great-uncle's will, the whole of the Adelerantz estates belonged to him, and he had only to show his documents in order to dispossess the false heir. But you remember poor Sten's craze—he thought more of the family honour than of all the money and lands in the world, and it seemed to him that it would be a terrible thing to let the world hear of a scandalous affair which must have occurred close upon a century ago. Besides, Count Carl was a very old man, and it would perhaps have been rather cruel to turn him out of house and home when he had already one

foot in the grave. So the only action Sten took was to go to his cousin, convince him of the justice of his claim, and agree to hush the affair up—it being, of course, understood that the estates would come to their rightful owner in due course. What he did not calculate upon was that that rascally old Carl should break faith, and make a will leaving every stick and stone to his widow. This put Sten in an awkward position; and, by way of additional complication, he happened, as you know, to be desperately in love with the Countess. The simplest solution would, of course, have been their marriage; but this, unfortunately, she could by no means be brought to consent to. So, thinking he had a full right to do so, he made her swear solemnly that, if she would not marry him, she would at all events never marry anyone else. He was ready to surrender his own claim to the property; but he was firmly resolved that no one who did not bear the name of Adelcrantz should ever enjoy it."

"But do you mean to tell me," I broke in at this point of Nordström's narrative, "that the Countess would consent to such a bargain?—that she would dream of keeping what did not belong to her? I don't believe a word of it."

"Ah, there comes the singular part of the story. Sten admitted that over and over again she had implored him upon her knees to assert his rights and to set her free, but that he had refused. He represented to her that the honour of the family demanded some sacrifice at her hands, and that as he was ready to accept the position of a guest in the house of which he was the lawful lord, so she must not shrink from a duty imposed upon her by circumstances. He had an odd kind of ascendancy over her; she was always a little afraid of him, I think; and I can easily understand that, feeling the great injustice that had been done to him, she may have thought that the smallest compensation she could make was to give in to his wishes. It was a painful position for both of them. Sten said he had persuaded himself—and I believe he was sincere—that his sole object was to preserve the house of Adelcrantz from disgrace; but no doubt he was glad to have the power of forcing the woman whom he loved to remain single. He half acknowledged as much at the end; he said there was some one whom she cared for; and I think you could not have helped pitying him if you had seen his remorse and misery. He kept on repeating, 'Oh, if I could bring her back to life again, she should have her lands and her husband too!—her lands and her husband too!' Poor fellow! The whole thing was a terrible tragedy."

That is the substance of what Nordström told me, puffing at his cigar, in the long twilight. He said he had condensed Sten's narrative; I, in my turn, have somewhat condensed his. What he said gave me a great deal of pain at the time. It seemed to me that the happiness of two lives had been most needlessly sacrificed to gratify a madman's whim. I was almost—God forgive me!—angry with her for having allowed such a fanciful obstacle to come between us. But now I no

longer feel quite as I did. She may have acted mistakenly; but her motive was a noble one. In that, as in all things, she thought of others before herself; and who am I to sit in judgment upon one so far above me?

And so the story of my life's romance is now complete: that much at least I have gained by my return to these familiar scenes. As I write by the open window, I can see the stir and bustle of this cheerful city going on just as of old. The flags are fluttering above the kiosks in the Strömparterre, the little steam-launches are plying busily from shore to shore, and yonder, across the Norrbro, comes King Oscar II. in his coach and four, the guard turning out with solemn rub-a-dub-dub to salute him, just as their predecessors used to salute his father in days of yore. I don't quarrel with Stockholm for not being in mourning; I don't expect the world to stand still because it has lost one unit of its population; but for my own part, I am a little sick of sunshine and merriment, and I think it is high time for me to pack up my clothes and set my face once more in the direction of my native fogs.

Fighting Fitzgerald.

THE portrait of Fighting Fitzgerald has been painted by enemies as vindictive as any that ever slandered the dead, and is therefore distorted in every feature.

George Robert—his baptismal name—was born in 1749. Through his father, a fair specimen of the profligate and reckless Irish landlords of long ago, he was the heir of Torlough, an estate near Castlebar, then worth 4,000*l.* a year; and also the representative of the Desmond, the eldest branch of the haughty Norman-Irish Fitzgeralds. His mother came of a race so conspicuously eccentric that the saying ran concerning it—"God made men, women, and—Harveys." Separating from her husband after two years of miserable married life, she remained for many years one of the gay leaders of gayest London society. She was the sister of that splendid singularity, the Earl-Bishop of Derry.

Brought up in England from infancy to his sixteenth year, George Robert was for a time an Eton scholar. In 1766 he was gazetted to a lieutenancy in the 69th regiment, then stationed in Ireland. Here, while yet a mere boy, he fought several duels, in which he displayed not a little generous feeling, and in one of which he lost a portion of his skull. In February 1770 he made a love-match with one of the daughters of a redoubtable Irish personage, the Right Honourable J. Conolly—otherwise known as "the Great Commoner." Thus he obtained a fortune of 30,000*l.*, and eventually became the brother-in-law of an Irish viceroy.

Ten thousand pounds of the money was handed over to the owner of Torlough, who was then, as ever, in pecuniary difficulties. In return he signed deeds securing George Robert 1,000*l.* a year in the present and the reversion of his estate, whole and unimpaired. This settlement was the main cause of our hero's faults and misfortunes, and ultimately of his doom.

Immediately after his marriage George Robert resigned his lieutenancy and went to France. At this period his appearance was singularly striking, nor did it ever undergo any change. The portrait painted of him at twenty remained perfectly true to the last.

He was under the middle height; "his person very slight and juvenile; his countenance extremely mild and insinuating. The existing taste for splendid attire he carried to the utmost. The button and loop of his hat, his sword-knot, and his shoe-buckles were brilliant with diamonds. His coat and vest were as rich as French brocade and velvet could make them. He wore a muff on his left arm, and two enamelled

watches, with a multitude of seals dangling from either fob." Another writer describes the muff as "drawing the eye of the public by its uncommon size; it fell from his chin to his toes!"

Indeed, his fondness for glittering baubles and ultra-finery amounted to a passion. At a later date, when his house at Torlough was sacked by the mob of Castlebar, he estimated his loss, in jewels and embroidered robes, at upwards of 20,000*l*.

Among the articles purloined on that occasion he mentions—"a casquet containing a complete set of diamond vest buttons, two large emeralds, a hat band with five or six rows of Oriental pearls worth 1,500*l*., a large engraved amethyst, a gold watch and chain studded with diamonds, several other gold watches and seals, a great number of antique and modern rings, gold shoe and knee buckles, silver shaving apparatus, several pairs of silver shoe and knee buckles, with 6,300*l*. worth of other jewels."

This diminutive, youthful-looking, and ornate Fitzgerald was pronounced "an effeminate little being" by those of his own sex who did not know him. As to those who did—"He was so light, foppish, and distinguished, none could think he was the man who had fought more duels than any other of his time."

The dames, without exception, pronounced him "a fascinating creature." Nor was the opinion confined to them. One who owed him no goodwill, Sir Jonah Barrington, allows that "a more polished and elegant gentleman was not to be met with." And the renowned "Dick" Martin, who met him pistol to pistol and got the worst of the encounter, confessed the strong impression made upon him by "the elegant and gentleman-like appearance" of his antagonist.

Even polished Paris admitted itself surpassed in all that was graceful and splendid by this extraordinary young Irishman. "*Qui est ce seigneur?*" asked the Parisians of one another, on seeing him for the first time. "*D'où vient-il? Il n'est pas François. Quelle magnificence! Quelle politesse! Est-il possible qu'il soit étranger!*"

Let us now conceive this dazzling outside as covering the best and boldest rider, the deftest swordsman, the surest shot, and the most reckless gambler of the day; let us conceive him with literary tastes, an author, and a patron of authors; with as much subtlety as daring; with intensest pride of race and intensest contempt for all that was vulgar; and with a repugnance that was absolutely passionate for the gross vices and carnalities and the coarse amusements of his era—and we shall have some idea of what "Fighting Fitzgerald" really was.

Received with enthusiasm by the Parisians, our hero plunged headlong into what was then the all-absorbing pursuit—gambling. Thanks to it and to his inordinate taste for splendour, not a farthing of his twenty thousand pounds was left by the end of the first year. As to his annuity, he never received a penny of it.

He might have found a home with the Bishop, who could see nothing

but perfection in him ; or, had he desired it, nothing would have been easier than for his numerous powerful friends to have thrust him into a lucrative sinecure. But he could not bring himself to quit delightful Paris and its whirl of refined excitement. So he sent his wife home to her friends, and remained in the gay capital, relying on the gambling skill he had acquired by this time for the support of his splendour. And here he showed to the fullest that strange capacity for rapid and complete transformation of character which seems peculiar to the Celtic race. In an incredibly short space of time he was all over the cruel and remorseless gambler, yet still as brilliant and fascinating as ever.

Among our hero's chosen associates was the Count d'Artois—afterwards Charles X.—who was then the votary of every pleasure, and notably as keen a gambler as Paris could boast of. The Prince had pocketed a very royal share of George Robert's fortune ; and when that was gone, continued to pocket an equally royal share of his dashing young friend's winnings. On one occasion Charles happened to win three thousand louis, which Fitzgerald would not pay down. The latter vanished therefore for a time from the presence of the Prince. A few days later he reappeared, with his purse replenished, but forgot to pay his debt of honour. Nevertheless, he presumed to take a part in the game that was going on, betting, in his usual plunging style, "a thousand louis against the Prince's card."

Raising his head, Charles remarked very coolly, "You owe me three thousand louis ; are you prepared to pay ?"

"No."

"Then how dare you bet in my presence ?"

Suiting the action to the word, his Royal Highness took Fitzgerald by the shoulder, led him to the stair-head, and dismissed him with an ignominious kick.

George Robert was now in an unpleasant position. As a man who had been publicly dishonoured, he was excluded from good society. Nor could he set himself right by crossing swords with the Prince, who was beyond the reach of a cartel, even from the head of the house of Desmond. To a common mind there was no getting out of the predicament, except by flying from the land or from life. Our youth, however, was not the possessor of a common mind. Disdaining both the alternatives, he hit upon a means of setting himself right with everybody, and that too with *éclat*.

Louis XVI. was a mighty hunter of the deer, and Fitzgerald, the *beau idéal* of horsemanship, was a constant follower of the royal pack. Shortly after the affair of the kick, the deer took a course not at all in harmony with the views of the mass of the hunters, making straight for the Seine.

Along the bank ran a road, fenced from the river by a wall some three feet high on the land side, but having a descent of fourteen or fifteen feet towards the current, which here ran deep and strong.

The deer leapt the wall, swam the stream, and gained the forest on the other side. So did the dogs. But all the hunters pulled up, with a single exception—Fitzgerald.

He dashed at the wall with a cheer and cleared it, amid the astonishment of the gentlemen and the screams of the ladies. Everybody concluded that horse and rider must surely be drowned. In a few minutes, however, the gallant horse was observed breasting the river and making straight for the opposite shore, which it reached in safety with its rider. The latter did not even lose a stirrup in achieving the harebrained feat.

Fitzgerald became more popular than ever with the courtiers. But though he had effaced his ignominy from every other mind, he could not forget it himself. As soon, therefore, as etiquette would allow he transferred himself to England.

Here he appeared under very favourable circumstances. The Harveys held high place in society, of which his mother, Lady Mary Fitzgerald, was one of the leaders. But our hero's most effective recommendation to the more exclusive London circles was the great reputation that had preceded him across the Channel. And a conspicuous item of that reputation was the fact that he had already fought *eleven* duels, though not yet twenty-four!

He soon became a favourite of fashion; and, moreover, a social leader himself—gathering round him a body of golden youth who formed themselves in most essentials on him. And foremost among those exquisites were the "wicked" Lord Lyttleton, and the officers of the elegant regiment of the day, Burgoyne's Light Horse.

In company with these curled darlings, he frequented all brilliant assemblies, surpassing everybody else in glitter and deep play, and treating whoever and whatever he encountered at variance with his delicate tastes with merciless ridicule and scorn. The last peculiarity involved him in a number of scrapes, including one duel, from all of which he extricated himself in a way that added to his brilliant reputation. At length an event occurred which showed his darker side, and brought forth in very bold relief his more repulsive characteristics as a gambler and a duellist.

Shortly after his arrival in England a youth known as Daisy Walker—the son of an honest tradesman who had left him 90,000*l.*—had a cornetcy purchased for him in Burgoyne's Light Horse by his rather injudicious guardians. The plebeian, who was still a minor, was very much looked down upon by the exquisites of that refined corps. Nevertheless they condescended to introduce him to all the fashionable follies of the day, and especially to win his money.

Ere many months had flown the Daisy was in difficulties. All his ready money had passed into the purses of his acquaintances, and with it bills to a large amount. Fitzgerald, a constant visitor at mess and one of the largest winners, held some of the bills to the nominal value of 3,000*l.*

Walker's guardians now interposed. Removing their charge from

the regiment, and indeed from fashionable society for the remainder of his minority, they compounded for his debts of all sorts, Fitzgerald receiving 500*l.* for his share. Our punctilious gentleman took the money, but not as Walker's guardians intended. In his eyes debts of honour were not to be compounded for like rascally trade debts; and he held himself ready to claim the residue of his account whenever the Daisy should furnish him with an occasion. This was all very French; and our hero was intensely French in most respects.

Walker chafed a good deal under the restraint imposed by his guardians, and the moment it was removed hurried back to his old haunts and habits. Fitzgerald kept him well in view, but made no move until he happened to surprise the Daisy making a heavy bet on a forthcoming race. No sooner had Walker booked his wager than Fitzgerald—following the august example of the Count d'Artois—met him with a claim for 2,500*l.* Walker refused to pay, and, for the next six months, was made supremely uncomfortable by the persecutions of Fitzgerald.

The Daisy was not remarkable for valour, and did his best to avoid Fitzgerald, who, on his part, was equally assiduous in hunting up the Daisy; and a game of hide-and-seek was maintained between the two which furnished the lookers-on with a good deal of amusement. Walker could not keep away from fashionable resorts, but he attended them in fear and trembling—always keeping a sharp eye on the door and hastening to retreat at the first indication of the approach of his terror. But he could not avoid his fate. The two met at length on Ascot racecourse, and Fitzgerald caned the Daisy, who was now compelled to challenge him. The duel, which had a good many sides, including a ludicrous one, was fought in the Low Countries towards the end of 1774.

Walker, being entitled to first shot, fired and missed; because, just as he pulled trigger, Fitzgerald flung himself into his favourite duelling attitude, and thus greatly diminished his height. It was now Fitzgerald's turn, and Walker prepared himself for the shot with very evident trepidation. Our hero saw what was passing in his mind, and resolved to take advantage of it. Instead of firing, he affected to consider his pistol somewhat out of order, and spent some minutes in hammering the flint with a key. The pistol being adjusted at length, he then turned round and lectured Walker's second concerning his neglect of some of the rules of the duels. The second received the rebuke with due humility, and hastened to rectify his error. All this time, be it observed, the poltroon was waiting to be shot at. At last all was right, and Fitzgerald, taking a very deliberate and ostentatious aim, lowered his pistol and apologised in very graceful terms for having used his cane on Walker. The latter and his second—being evidently unacquainted with the law of the duels, which insisted that a caning was always to be apologised for before the caner could take a shot at the caned one—indulged in a feeling of relief, which was rather premature.

Having made his apology, Fitzgerald resumed his fighting air and

demanding his 2,500*l.* or the resumption of the duel at the point where it had been interrupted. Walker was much inclined to comply, but his sense of the overwhelming disgrace which must attend submission mastered his terror, and he refused to pay. Levelling his pistol, but lingering on his aim, Fitzgerald offered to bet anybody a thousand guineas that he would hit Walker wherever he pleased, but of course received no reply.

"You won't take the bet?" cried the duellist; "then here goes at his right shoulder!"

The bullet struck the spot indicated, but did not penetrate, thanks to a couple of thick coats which Walker wore. However, it inflicted a contusion which disabled the arm and terminated the duel, though the quarrel itself was kept up much longer.

On his return to town Fitzgerald reiterated his demand for "his" money or another meeting. Both alternatives being rejected, he attempted to renew the quarrel on other grounds, proclaiming everywhere that Walker had been "padded" on the late occasion, and had thus escaped injury by fraud. This device proving as ineffectual as the others, and society frowning on the system of hunting his victim about which our hero had resumed, the latter published an account of the affair which certainly hit Walker very hard, but which also revolted most people by the cynical frankness of its avowals, gambling sentiments, and duellistic practices which, though common enough on the Continent, had not yet obtained currency in England.

In short, the Walker business—displaying as it did so many un-English qualities in our hero—ruined him for ever in London society. Nobody cared to consort with him afterwards. He therefore took an early opportunity of returning to France and to close gambling partnership with an old comrade, Major Baggs, like himself an ex-officer of the 69th, and the original of "Captain Duff Brown" in Charles Lever's novel, *Barrington*.

There was then a mania among French fashionables for English horses and for horse-racing as it was in England; and Fitzgerald (in addition to his gambling speculations) took to supplying his Parisian acquaintances with the one and to initiating them into the practices of the other, making full profit the while out of their sublime ignorance of both. Somehow or other, few people can have much to do with horse transactions without contracting some of the peculiarities of the low-lived horse-dealer, and ere long George Robert became rather too well known for such peculiarities. A bit of sharp practice of this kind enabled him to fasten his acquaintance on another Irish celebrity of that day, Archibald Hamilton Rowan, who happened to be then in Paris.

Rowan, who was very unwilling to have anything to do with Fitzgerald, but whose easy good-nature would not allow him to repel the other's advances, has left an account of this acquaintance. It is the only notice extant of this portion of Fitzgerald's career, but it is sufficient. A

better picture than it gives of our hero as he then was could not be desired. This perfection, however, is not due to any artistic skill on the part of Rowan, but to the fact that Fitzgerald was one of those people whose attitudes are always picturesque in the highest degree, and who interest us in any portrait, however coarsely drawn, which has the merit of fidelity.

Not long before, a Mr. Sandford, a very young man and a stranger in the French capital, was fastened upon by Fitzgerald, who was always on the watch for such victims, and led him to supper at the most dangerous house in the city—that kept by Baggs. Play of the deepest kind succeeded the supper, and Sandford lost a large sum. Then came a dispute between the plunderers respecting the division of the booty; and this developed rapidly into a mortal quarrel, the true cause of which neither cared to avow. Baggs, who considered himself the party aggrieved, found a more decent pretext, asserting that he had lent Fitzgerald much money from time to time, and that the latter refused to acknowledge the debt.

One evening, when Fitzgerald was quitting the theatre with Rowan, he encountered Baggs in the lobby. There was a short but sharp dispute between the gamblers. In the end George Robert drew his glove over Baggs's face, an insult to which Baggs replied by dashing his hat in the other's eyes.

Here the guard appeared and laid hold of the Major, while Fitzgerald slipped out and was driven off by Rowan. Several days passed, Baggs remaining under arrest and Fitzgerald finding shelter in Rowan's hotel. At length the Major was released, and it was arranged that the parties should meet on Austrian territory, in the vicinity of Valenciennes, and fight the quarrel out. Baggs was to be attended by a Captain O'Toole, and his opponent by a Mr. Hodges, and the parties were to leave Paris on the same day.

The day came, and Baggs and his second started as arranged. Hodges did not appear, but sent his principal a note in which he apprised him that he had just been seized by a severe attack of gout, and could not move. A messenger was despatched in the hope of arresting Baggs, but the Major was gone. Fitzgerald now appealed piteously to Rowan to save his honour; and the latter, who had no desire to mix himself with the affair, consented, though reluctantly, to act as second.

Here occurred a difficulty which, as Rowan significantly remarks, explained the sudden attack of gout which had prostrated Hodges—Fitzgerald had no money, and no means of raising any. He drew a bill for 100*l.*, but nobody would cash it until Rowan was induced to endorse it. Ultimately the good-natured second had to pay the money.

The pair set off in pursuit of Baggs and O'Toole, and soon reached Valenciennes. A suitable piece of ground was soon met with, and the distance—eight paces—measured. Baggs knew too well with whom he had to deal to let him have his pet distance, five paces. When the parties were placed in position, Baggs beckoned his second and whispered

a few words. The next moment O'Toole drew Rowan aside, and, apologising for the remark, said he had reason to think that Fitzgerald was *plastronné*—a word meaning padded, or plated. What followed was remarkable.

Overhearing the remark, Fitzgerald threw off his coat and vest, "exhibiting himself," writes Rowan, "to our great astonishment, with his shirt tied round the body by a broad ribbon, *coulour du rose*, while two narrower ones closed his shirt sleeves round the upper and lower joints of the arms." George Robert gave an explanation of this which we omit. It did not satisfy Rowan; and it does not satisfy ourselves. The Major was afterwards examined to the same extent, and no further, though he invited Rowan, in his bluff, English way, to "Feel, sir; feel." The duel then went on.

"Baggs sank on his quarters," writes Rowan, "something like the Scottish lion in the Royal arms, while Fitzgerald stood as one who has made a lounge in fencing. They fired together, and were in the act of levelling their second pistols, when Baggs fell on his side, saying, 'Sir, I am wounded.'

" 'But you are not dead!' said Fitzgerald.

"At the same moment he discharged his second pistol at his fallen antagonist.

"Baggs immediately started on his legs and advanced on Fitzgerald, who, throwing the empty pistol at him, quitted his station, and kept a zigzag course across the field, Baggs following. I saw the flash of Baggs' second pistol, and, at the same moment, Fitzgerald lay stretched on the ground. I was just in time to catch Baggs as he fell, after firing his second shot. He swooned from intense pain, the small bone of his leg being broken. Mr. Fitzgerald now came up, saying—

" 'We are both wounded; let us go back to our ground.' "

Such a proposal could not be entertained; and the wounded duellists—for Fitzgerald had been hit in the thigh—were carried off the field.

"I could not help asking him," adds Rowan, meaning George Robert, "how he came to fire his second pistol. His reply was: 'I should not have done it to any man but Baggs.' "

Our hero was long confined by his wound, which left him slightly lame for the rest of his life. When he recovered he went straight to Ireland, which he reached towards the end of 1775.

Thanks to his uncle, the Bishop of Derry, with whom he was always a favourite, he was able to make a suitable appearance in Dublin. Here he fixed himself for some years, and met with the greatest success; and here, again, he displayed that capacity for rapid and complete change of character which we have already remarked. In untoward circumstances he had flung aside his nobler qualities and conformed to degradation, until it seemed as if that, and no other, had been his native state; and in success he cast off the baseness which penury had fastened to him, and resumed his old self with the same facility and completeness.

For the next three years he was in most things the superb representative of the haughtiest race on the island. His house in Merriion Street was the resort of all that was high-bred in Dublin society. He was the idol of the mob too; for in addition to his dash, glitter, and fighting reputation—things always dear to the Irish—he took impetuously to patriotism, which was then a passion with all that was great and noble in the land, as well as with the masses.

He took the lead wherever he went; outshining all that was brilliant; humiliating all the swaggerers—notably those legal and pugnacious celebrities, Barry Yelverton and Fitzgibbon—two men who remained ever after his mortal enemies; and winning, it is said, no less than a hundred thousand pounds during this short period.

Whatever he might have been elsewhere, he always gambled in princely style in Ireland. His stake was never less than fifty guineas—his sideboard was heaped with rouleaus to that amount; while he seldom stirred abroad without having a hundred of them carried along by a couple of servants in gorgeous liveries.

There was no sharp practice now, but much wild wagering, on which tradition still loves to dwell.

Other traditions tell how he dealt with the "bucks," a plague then infesting the streets of Dublin, and, indeed, the streets of every town in Ireland. These "bucks" were half-bred young fellows of some means and high animal spirits, whose sole occupation consisted in making town-life intolerable to quiet people. Parliament was more than once compelled to frame penal enactments with the view of restraining their peculiar ruffianism; but as there was no properly constituted police to enforce them these statutes were of small effect.

Among the tricks of the Dublin bucks was this. One of them would take his stand in the middle of a crossing on a dirty day, and, drawing his sword thrust everybody who wanted to pass into the mud. It was a common thing to see half-a-dozen or more of these unpleasant sentries lining a leading thoroughfare all ready to afford each other support. Nor were they content with merely obstructing the passage. They knocked off hats, ripped up garments, and pricked the limbs of the wearers with the points of their weapons, and broke ribald jests on them the while—to the vast amusement of the ragamuffins who used to collect in the vicinity. If anybody turned on one of these bullies the rest would rush up and form a circle round him; then seizing him by the collar and the arms they would prick him about the legs until they considered him punished sufficiently.

Fitzgerald proposed to some of his brother exquisites and fire-eaters that they should clear the streets of the metropolis of these pests. It was just the sort of proposal to suit such daring spirits, and an association was immediately formed to carry it out. After Fitzgerald himself the most conspicuous members were three Sligo notabilities—Mat Ormsby, Abram Fenton, and Pat O'Hara, one of whom, round whose

knees the writer has often played, attained the patriarchal age of ninety-seven. Like their leader they were consummate swordsmen, and dandies of the first water—the Dandy being in all essentials the antipodes of the Buck—a distinction which people who write about the Ireland of the past are very apt to forget.

The association set to work most heartily, and in this way. Whenever a fine afternoon followed a showery morning they would sally forth in knots of four or five, each being followed by a lusty valet carrying an oak sapling. On reaching the haunts of the bucks the servants kept the rabble off while the exquisites did the work they had undertaken. For a couple of months few days passed without three or four affrays between the bucks and the dandies, in which the former invariably came off second-best. Ere long the mainstay of the bucks, the mob, turned against them too. This meant that defeat was sure to be followed by hooting and pelting with mud and stones. Then the pleasant pastime of blocking the thoroughfares in broad daylight was abandoned. Oddly enough, the man who had the chief hand in putting down the bucks for the time, is the one who more than anybody else is credited with their brutal tricks.

Had Fitzgerald confined himself to Dublin the probabilities are that he would have remained to the last a social leader, and been remembered only as the fitting companion of Charlemont, Alvanly, Flood, Ponsonby, and the rest, who made the choicer circles of the Irish metropolis in those days the most brilliant in Europe. But his evil fate drew him down to semi-barbarous Mayo, where he—the essence of Parisian refinement—was as much out of place and as much misunderstood as he would have been among the Zulus.

On his return to Ireland, George Robert found his father—who was evidently in his dotage—in the hands of three very dangerous persons. These were, Charles Lionel, our hero's younger brother, who saw nothing before him but poverty, should the settlement of the estate on George Robert remain unchanged; a woman whom old Fitzgerald had taken from a life of lowest infamy and made his mistress; and a relative, Patrick Randal McDonnell by name, who was a low-lived attorney, profligate in his manners, and utterly unscrupulous in his profession—a pettifogger of the genuine old rascally stamp, and such a one—so given to violence and fraud, to impudent perversions of the law and to daring contempt of it when it suited his purpose—as was not then to be met with out of Ireland. He was, besides, the recognised leader of about the most truculent and lawless mob in the island—that of Castlebar.

These three exercised unlimited sway over old Fitzgerald, simply because they allowed the depraved appetites of the weak old semi-lunatic full swing. And they used their power in obtaining for themselves and their supporters, among whom were some of the leading men of the neighbourhood, the most valuable portions of the property on long leases and at nominal rents. The leases of course were illegal, but the accomplices stuck to the plunder as long as they could.

Our hero took the necessary legal proceedings to secure his rights. While these were in progress the old man, who was enormously in debt, was arrested and carried to a Dublin spunging-house. George Robert interposed at once and procured his father's release, by paying down 8,000*l.*, and rendering himself responsible for the rest of the old man's just debts. In return the latter ratified the original settlement. And shortly afterwards the Court of Chancery constituted George Robert custodian of the estate. However, by this time the old man was back again in the hands of the trio, and our hero had literally to fight his way into possession, storming the family mansion in the course of the business, and at the risk of his life. This was in 1778.

George Robert now set up for a model landlord, and did a great many wise and good things. But he set up also for a political and social reformer of the most advanced order; he declared against the oligarchy that ruled the country; he denounced alike the tyranny and greed of the landlords, the indolence of the tenants, the treatment of the very poor, the extravagance of everybody who had anything to spend, and the universal lawlessness; he settled a colony of thrifty and industrious Presbyterians from the north on his lands, and provided them with a clergyman and a meeting-house; and he interfered, when no other man of position dared to do so, in aiding the officers of the Crown to arrest a multitude of people in and about Castlebar, guilty of the then very common offences of obtaining the premiums offered by the Linen Board by fraud and perjury. Thus he set against him the great landowners, the squireens, the fanatical lower classes, and the dangerous rabble of his county-town. Every one of them regarded him as an interloper who was to be put down, no matter how.

But such was the dash, energy, and terrible reputation of Fighting Fitzgerald, and such his powerful connections, that not a man, far or near, dared to oppose him openly. The best among them cowered before him as though he had been their sovereign. And it must be allowed that he bore himself towards most of them—especially those whom he regarded as upstarts—with all the scorn and insolence of an Eastern despot, which only rendered the general hatred the more intense.

The only way in which his enemies could reach him was by inciting his brother, the mistress, and the pettifogger to annoy him in every way; and this was done to an extent perfectly inconceivable. Over and over, murderous ambushes were laid for him, and over and over were the wild fighting squires of Galway urged against him; but he escaped the first, though not always unwounded, while his sword was invariably an overmatch for the swords of the second.

Tired out at last, he seized his father by force with the view of paralyzing the trio. It was a lawless act, but hundreds worse were daily taking place around him; and considering the circumstances under which the deed was done, nobody really blamed him. In our own day the law would have assisted him in it; but there was little law to be

had in such cases twenty miles outside of Dublin in those days, and none at all in Mayo. So far as that sort of thing went, Cromwell's equivalent for Connaught* still held good. The deed was illegal, however, and that was all his enemies wanted.

A warrant was granted against him for kidnapping his own father, but the difficulty was to execute it. For Fitzgerald had erected and armed a formidable battery commanding the approaches to his house, and—this being the volunteer era of Ireland—had organised a military force among his tenantry, who, being mostly Presbyterians and strangers, hated of the natives, were devoted to his person.

He was arrested at last by surprise, in the grand-jury room of Castlebar, on the first day of the summer assizes of 1780, and tried instantly—the presiding judge being a member of one of the powerful county families. It is hard to square the proceedings that followed with modern ideas of what such things should be. George Robert was convicted and sentenced to pay a fine of 1,000*l.*, and to be imprisoned for three years—the latter portion of the sentence being intended to keep him from taking any part in the forthcoming general election of 1782.

Irish prison discipline was then very lax. Three days after his committal, our hero—who had the run of the gaol—walked up to the principal entrance, threw down a bag of guineas to be scrambled for by the warders, and walked quietly out while they were rolling in a heap on the floor. He remained at large for fifteen months, during which he kept his father tight in his clutches; hunted, gambled, and duelled to the top of his bent; and carried things in general with a high hand over everybody.

At length the general election drew nigh, and the Government, giving way to the pressure put upon it by the Mayo magnates, sent a strong military force against Torlough. There were three companies of foot, a troop of horse, and a battery of artillery under a field officer. It found the fort dismantled, and George Robert and his father gone. Three weeks later the latter turned up in Sligo and the former in Dublin. Our hero was arrested instantly, and kept in prison till the general election, when he was released at the intercession of his high-placed relatives.

The old man was now dead; but the trio, who had managed him so long, continued to pester George Robert still, being encouraged, of course, by the leading men of the county. His imprisonment had somewhat tamed our hero, who became a good deal more circumspect than of old, though still remaining quite sufficiently headlong. This emboldened the pettifogger. Among other courses, the latter took to bringing charges of attempting his life against Fitzgerald—four of them in as many months. They were all transparently false, and failed egregiously. Moreover, he instigated the mob of Castlebar to rob Fitzgerald, harry

* "Hell or Connaught."

his lands, maltreat his tenants, and take pot-shots at himself. In short, McDonnell got up a feud of the right old Irish fashion between the men of Torlough and the mob of the county-town which stood about four miles off.

At length the pettifogger and two of his accomplices, towards the close of 1785, had the audacity to kidnap one of Fitzgerald's servants and to hold him close prisoner in one of their houses for eighteen days, doing their best the while to bribe or intimidate the man into turning false witness against his master in support of one of McDonnell's murder charges.

The man escaped, and Fitzgerald lost no time in obtaining warrants for the arrest of the three, who went into hiding for several weeks. Their whereabouts being discovered at last, they were cleverly captured by a party from Torlough, early on the morning of February 24, 1786. Fitzgerald directed the prisoners to be marched to Castlebar, and the party started immediately.

On the way occurred a circumstance which Fitzgerald's enemies have succeeded in throwing into deep obscurity. A shot was fired at the escort, one of whom there is reason to believe was killed by it. Thereupon the Torlough men—fiery spirits all, who had little regard for human life, and who heartily detested two of their prisoners—turned upon these two, McDonnell being one, and slew them. They then retraced their steps to Torlough with the remaining prisoner. George Robert heard their story with amazement. Disregarding those about him, who entreated him to fly, he despatched a mounted messenger to Castlebar with the news, and sat down quietly to wait the result.

They soon came in the shape of a party of soldiers and a raging mob. The former took possession of George Robert, and left the mob to sack his house at their ease. This was done very effectually; plunder to the value of 30,000*l.* being carried off, nor was any inquiry ever made concerning it.

Our hero was lodged in his old quarters about noon that day. Two hours later a troop of assassins—connived at by the local authorities—entered the gaol and assailed the prisoner, whom they wounded in fifty places; nor did they depart until, as they thought, they had "done his business." Unfortunately for him, they were mistaken.

He was now completely in the hands of his enemies, and these, from the greatest to the smallest, took full advantage of his situation. Under pretence of preventing a recurrence of the outrage, he was confined so rigorously as to render the preparation of his defence really impossible. Meanwhile care was taken to suppress everything—men and facts—that told in his favour, and to twist the matter fatally against him.

The assizes came on at length, the presiding judge and the prosecuting counsel being his old enemies, Yelverton and Fitzgibbon, and the high sheriff an enemy more pronounced than either, the Honourable Denis Browne.

The ringleaders of the prison outrage in February were tried first, and though the case against them was proved to the hilt, they were every one acquitted.

Then George Robert was arraigned with two others. The theory of the prosecution was that the slaughter had been premeditated, and that a sham of rescue had been got up to give a colour to it; but not a particle of reliable evidence was produced in proof. On the contrary, much of the testimony was improbable, and the more material portions were contradicted by circumstances that could not lie. In short, there was nothing whatever to connect Fitzgerald with the deed. Still he was condemned, and *left for immediate execution*, as were his companions in misfortune.

At six in the evening, an hour after the hanging of the others, he was led to the hill of Castlebar, where a new gaol was in course of erection. A part of the scaffolding was utilised as a gallows. George Robert was dressed in a faded suit of the uniform of the Castlebar Hunt, his vest soiled and unbuttoned, his shoes and stockings coarse and dirty, and his hat bound with a hempen cord. A more striking contrast to his former elegance could not be conceived. His step, however, was firm, and his demeanour self-possessed and courageous.

The execution—greatly prolonged by bungling, which many thought intentional—was very cruel and trying to the doomed man. The first rope broke with his weight; and as nobody could be induced to supply another, they were obliged, after waiting about an hour, to use a rope from the building. This proved so long that Fitzgerald's feet touched the ground. And it was only when a storm of indignation from the spectators apprised the high sheriff, who stood by, that this vile work was being carried too far for even the mob of Castlebar to put up with it, that the rope was shortened and the tragedy brought to an end.

The dead body was transported at once to Torlough, and "waked" for a few hours in an out-house. At midnight it was borne to the grave, "dug on the wrong side of a ruined chapel, in a lonely part of the estate." Here it was buried without coffin in the dress described.

What right-minded people thought of the trial and execution may be gathered from the following remark made to the judge on his return to Dublin: "Come from doing Connaught justice, my lord! Yes, George Robert Fitzgerald was a murderer, and—he was murdered."

Many years later his brother, Charles Lionel, made it a death-bed request that he should be buried in the grave of the celebrated duellist. When this was opened, the body of George Robert was found almost perfect, a fact which told strongly on the superstitious minds of the people, but which may be accounted for by the chemical properties of the soil. However, it is beyond dispute that not a single one of the ringleaders in the prison died a natural death.

New Lamps for Old Ones.

"THE African Magician put his twelve new lamps into a basket, and went out with this on his arm to the neighbourhood of Aladdin's palace. Here he walked to and fro, crying, with a loud voice, 'Who will exchange old lamps for new ones?' At last the Princess Badroulboudour heard his voice, but as she could not distinguish what he said, she sent one of her slaves, who accordingly went forth from the palace to ascertain what was the reason of all the noise and bustle. 'O Princess!' replied the slave, 'who can possibly help laughing at seeing yonder fool with a basket of new lamps on his arm, which he offers to exchange for old ones?' The Princess, who was ignorant of the value of the lamp, and its importance both to Aladdin and to herself, consented to make the trial, and ordered a eunuch to go and get it exchanged."

The luckless Princess in the Arabian tale had an excuse for her neglect of her archæological treasure which modern Italy has not—its virtue had been kept hidden from her, while Italy knows that the powers of the slaves of her lamp have been the sources of most of the sympathy and all of the admiration she enjoys, with such improvement in her material and political prosperity as they may have led to. Badroulboudour would not more famously have deceived herself if she had supposed that her brand-new lamp would have restored Aladdin's fortunes, than would modern Italians in attributing to the work of their days any of the fascinations and attractions which make Italy the goal of so many pilgrimages, the chiefest of the beloved faces of the earth to the Artist, the Poet, or the Dreamer. When true reverence for the magic of her mighty masters died out, the sense of their own interest and the honour the inheritance reflects even on the latest generation of their descendants, should have taught them to respect the treasures which, once destroyed or defaced, neither time nor labour, vain regrets or vainer restoration, will ever bring us to knowledge of again. That hair's breadth nearer to the infinite beauty which makes the difference between the work of the supreme genius and that of his best follower, no restorer can ever measure, nor will he ever respect; and the nineteenth century sculptor does not exist who can follow with his chisel the fine lines of Phidias or the Pisani. Yet to-day, all over Italy, common stone-cutters are chiseling away the traces of the hands of the greatest race of artists that the Christian era has seen, or duller daubers are burying under their leaden gloom the touch of the great prophets of colour and design, till we are tempted to cry out in bitterness of heart to those who sit on the councils, "Destroy if you will, but restore no more; complete

what Goth and Vandal, Hun and Saracen began—level the cathedral and burn the picture, but give us no more of these ghastly mockeries to which the name of the master is given, but in which no touch or shade of his remains ; so that we may keep the glory of the artist alive without the fear of these empty simulacra coming to give the lie to all our ideals, and make Titian and Tintoret, Donatello and the Pisani, as mythical as Dædalus."

If I shall be accused of grossly exaggerating, if not fabricating, in what I have just said, I reply that unfortunately there is no exaggerating the insensibility of the powers that be in control of the monuments of the Italian cities. I will give one fact more eloquent than all my words. The Duomo of Florence, as we all know, is the central glory of Tuscan art. As architecture, there is nothing so worthy to be held sacred on Italian soil, and here Giotto and the Pisani, rivalling Donatello and Della Robbia, with their worthiest compeers, did their best to honour Florence and the Queen of their faith. The restorers are going over the whole of the exterior sculpture—mind you, the most perfect *architectural* sculpture in the world—with corrosive acids applied bountifully, and left to act as long as they will, and then the stone-cutters go over the whole carious surface and restore it to new bright marble—stone-cutters whom they over-pay, unless they are chiseling the pavement of the streets, at two shillings the day.

"But," I seem to hear an indignant host of art-lovers cry out, "are there then no Italians left in Italy—are there no men left in whom exists still the appreciation of what is inimitable and delectable in art, and whom the knowledge of the dishonour being done the greatest names of Italy can move to indignation and action to stop this infamy?" There are such men, and I doubt not that their souls are galled as are mine and yours, who question ; but they are scattered all over Italy, without any union in their vexation, and in the quiet and patient way of an Italian who has long been accustomed to suffer wrong, each waits to know that others feel as he does. They are not in politics, and have no friends who are in the Bureau of Public Works ; and the municipal councils are a numerous swarm—Gradgrinds and Dombeys, and such—and they have communal architects who are their friends and who must have work. And these architects are mere builders, who have no more sense of the value of those finer arts which lend themselves to glorify architecture than they have of the music of Anacreon's verse ; they understand the strength of mortar, and how by it to pile stone on stone ; few, if any of them would hesitate to undertake to pull down St. Mark's or Giotto's Campanile, and build a better structure in its place ; while, as to the wall-surfaces which we are to see, they may be green or grey, full of fretting, or bare as a boulder in a brook—that they don't concern themselves about ; while as to that fol-de-rol of design which Giotto charged his soul with on his Campanile, if the commune wanted any such puerilities, they would get them done at so much the square metre, or so much the day's work,

and never trouble Time to find them a master for it. As for the general public, they like things of new frosty marble like the ornaments on a wedding cake; and when the people who have in charge the renovation of Sta. Maria dei Fiori have finished and taken down their scaffoldings, baring the skinned and mutilated sculptures which were the pride of Giotto and Donatello, the people, I say, will clap their hands and think they see Our Lady of Flowers as good as new.

The journalists, who as a general thing control or express the little public opinion which exists in Italy, belong to the indifferent public or to the friends of the architects and communes, though *Fanfulla* has nobly distinguished itself in the matter of St. Mark's; while the *Opinione* of Rome and the *Nazione* of Florence have always had a reasonable place for pleas of good taste and reverence. There may be others, but as I do not see all the Italian journals, I am unable to say how far protest against such incredible barbarism as I have related of the works on the Duomo of Florence has a chance of being heard. I do know that some of the journals have replied to the recent protests against the restoration of St. Mark's with scurrilous abuse.

In any popular sense of respect for antiquity or care for artistic excellence in Italy there is no hope. It is a curious phenomenon, which we see most clearly shown in the history of Greece and Italy, but which is probably a universal law, that art like empire never returns to any seat it once has occupied. What the standard of popular taste was in Greece in the days of Pericles we have no means of conceiving; that of Florence in the days of Giotto, and Venice or those of the Bellini, must have been far above anything we know now, judging from the most infallible indication—costume; and we have a right to suppose, from what we see at Pompeii and other late Greek communities, that the artistic sense was a part of the popular endowment. But the modern Hellene has a negation of artistic sense so absolute, that even in comparison with the neighbouring Bulgarian and still undeveloped Albanian, it is crudity. In the land of Phidias the flame of art burnt out so utterly, that there is hardly a nation in the limits of civilisation, and certainly none of the energy of intellect of the modern Greek, so completely and universally devoid of the art element as it is; and next to it is the Italian of the nineteenth century, and especially him of Florence. Nobody would compare modern Athens with Florence; and yet in what is the work of the last fifty years the greater credit for what has been done is due to the Athenian. The Greek is very like the Yankee—plain, practical, and utilitarian in his doings, and vaporous and turgid in his sayings. The cities of both are clean, well-built, and without architectural pretensions as a general thing; the one seems conscious that practically genius has gone from him, and the other that it has not come yet; the occasional infractions of this seemingly self-imposed law are so many lessons for its observance. But in comparison with the Florentine, the Greek is aesthetic negation as compared with positive bad taste. All that is built in Athens since

1830 might have been built in any new city in the far west of America where building stone was plenty; but all that has been reared in Florence since 1700 could only have been built where taste had reached an extreme of corruption.

But in reference to the inheritance of artistic wealth which their respective epochs of great art have left them, the Greek is beyond comparison more wise. He makes no pretension to build new Parthenons, but he has the good taste not to clean his old one: the delicious tint of Time's toning on its Pentelicon does not offend his sense of fitness, and he has no envy to scrub it. The Theseium is less lovely in tint, and has evidently been stuccoed, as to its columns, but he makes no attempt to plaster and restore it; his little Byzantine churches stand yet, alike undesecrated by trades or architect; and every shapeless and irrecongnisable fragment thrown up in the excavations is put away as the Arab puts a bit of unknown writing, in the fear that the name of some God may be inscribed on it. I used to think he carried reverence to ridicule; but when I lived in Florence, and other parts of Italy, I learned to wish that the Italian had learned a little of the ridiculous virtue.

The Florentine, who borrows importance as he walks through the streets where he knows Giotto and Dante walked, holding himself the first, if not best, educated in Europe, finds his old treasures (he has no new ones) out of fashion, and will refurbish them; he must have them as new as his last Paris hat, or the English harness with which he looms, illustrious, four-in-hand, in the Cascine. The enterprising municipalities (one can't help wondering into what deeper circle of the Inferno Dante would have crowded them, could he have conceived their Vandalism possible—syndic, councillors, architects and all) must forsooth make this old Florence of theirs a new city, and they have, with a vengeance, put new wine in an old bottle.

Men who have passed their lives in the study of art know best, perhaps alone know, the fine degrees that lie between the works of genius in its higher manifestations; how hard to distinguish between the work of the master and that of the pupil—Lionardo and Luini—Titian and certain of his pupils; it is sometimes painfully easy to see how all those fine degrees are abolished by the restorer and cleaner. He would be a bold man, even amongst the best living sculptors, who would attempt to re-chisel the surface of the Venus of Milo, or one of the fragments of the Parthenon. What should we say to one who proposed to do it with baths of acid, followed by scrapers and chisels in the hands of common workmen? Well, this is just what, to a greater or less degree, is going on in most of those Italian cities where there is any architecture of which sculpture is an important part; it is being made to look like new. I have seen the executioners' scaffold up in the Cathedral and Campanile of Pisa; have seen the exquisite little Capella della Spina—a bijou that should have been removed bodily to some museum—blocked round and beset with scaffolding for months, and maybe years—

I don't remember it free from them ; have seen them at Venice, and saw them when I was last at Florence in their worst shape.

Now the Duomo of Florence is to the great central school of Tuscan art what the Parthenon was to the Attic—the result of the best artistic talent of the best time of its art. We have seen how the Greek treats the Parthenon—what the Italian of Venice bombarded it into—and we shall see how the Florentine treats his Parthenon, the temple of his immaculately-conceived Virgin. I, the denouncer, will not use my own words—they may seem hot and distempered ; I will quote faithfully and without exaggeration a letter just written me by a friend of mine who has worked and studied on the Duomo, knows its value, and has had free access to the “works,” and whose statements may be taken without a grain of salt. The staff which carried on these so-called restorations was composed, let me premise, of half a dozen common stonecutters, under the charge of a master mason :—

“ They commenced their operations at the cornice, working downwards, and their method of procedure was this : To clean the surface of the carving, which could not be cleaned with sandstone as were the mouldings and panelings—they covered it with a strong acid, which so far ate away the surface of the marble as to leave it, when washed, perfectly white ; after this, one of the men was set to tool over the work, to sharpen its lines, and make it look in form and feature as he thought it ought. Not only was the delicate carving of capital and crocket subjected to this most horrible treatment, but even the more delicately carved statuettes.” [And let the reader remember that these are miniature statues, the largest of them scarcely two feet high, and of the very finest workmanship ever done in Tuscany.] “ Not unfrequently did I find the men using these same statuettes as convenient pegs on which to hang their bags and coats. But this was not all. Working from above downwards, the pieces of marble that were knocked out, in falling, so damaged the unprotected work beneath, that on the capitals of one window I counted no less than ten breakages resulting merely from this carelessness on the part of the workmen.” [This, my correspondent, in reply to my question, said he inferred from the perfect freshness of the fractures, and in some cases from the fragments lying near.] “ Moreover, in renewing the separate pieces of marble which they wished to replace, they did more to diminish the stability of the whole marble veneer than ever they could do by most careful insertion of new blocks to strengthen it, for an old piece was removed not because it was liable to fall out—indeed, it was such a work to remove some, that they often had to hammer out a block piece by piece—but because it had some superficial flaw, so that it would not take such fair polish as they wished it to.”

Now it must not be supposed that the ornament and statuary on the Duomo had been made carious, much less eaten away, by the weather. In general, the finest detail of the ornament is still as sharp as when it

was finished, and it is only toned by the exposure, and not a single figure is endangered by wear; but their tone don't please the fine sense of the Florentine municipal, who is in the state of the Yankee from Illinois who preferred Power's Greek Slave to the Venus de' Medici "because the marble was so good and white."

I think, on the whole, I was wrong in assigning the Athenian less æsthetic capacity than the Florentine; the latter must go to the bottom of the scale; for the Athenian, though he loves, and has, a *clean* city, never thought of cleaning an antique to make it look better.

If I have not already astonished my readers, I shall succeed in doing so when I tell them that this process of flaying the Duomo is to continue until the whole church is raw, and that in two or three months the door of the Pisani, perhaps the *chef d'œuvre* of the school in delicate and exquisite ornamentation, will be reached, and that from the main build ing they propose to go on to Giotto's Campanile.

Remonstrance has been useless, even at Rome; now that the work has been begun it must be completed, they say, which means that, having destroyed half the building so far as its finest art character is concerned, it must be entirely destroyed: having skinned the half to the white marble, they must give it the final unity of complete desecration. Let us at least hope that no friend of art will subscribe another penny to the fund for completing the Duomo till this barbarism is suppressed once for all, and the flaying scaffold taken down. A few years will restore the tone to the flayed portion: an eternity of Italian taste will never restore what the Duomo is losing.

When, therefore, the Italian journals, enraged at the foreign interference with their desecration of the most precious heritage of the middle and subsequent ages, tell us that knowledge and taste are not limited to England or unknown in Italy, we have only to point to the Duomo being flayed without a remark or remonstrance from the whole of Italy; to the Cathedral and Campanile and Spina of Pisa; the choir of St. Francis at Assisi, barbarously torn out to be replaced by modern Italian carpenter's work; or the cathedral of Perugia, with its new *café* interior, and its superb stained glass of the fourteenth century taken down to be restored by nineteenth century glass-painters—all unnoticed by the journalism so vigilant in resentment; we have only to point to the modern Italian sculpture, so petty, so trivial, so essentially vulgar in its contrast with the dignified and simple work on the front of almost any of their churches (when unrestored), to show the Italians themselves that, with all their cleverness (and certainly modern Italian sculpture is exceedingly clever in its own way, and original enough), there is no class of workmen amongst them who show the least appreciation of what is most precious in the fourteenth and fifteenth century art. The firm conviction in every branch of art is that the work of to-day is better than, and may fitly replace, the work done five hundred years ago, and that better men than the Pisani, Donatello, or Giotto, are as common a studios in Florence,

That neither taste nor artistic talent abounds in any modern country at all comparable to that of the fourteenth century in Florence, or in Venice at the date of the building of St. Mark's, I am perfectly aware; nor do I believe that Englishmen, Germans, or even Frenchmen, any more than Italians, are equal to the reconstruction of the menaced façade of the great church of Venice. I am willing even to admit that Italians are as capable as any moderns: but that is not enough. What the world wants is not reconstruction but preservation, because no moderns can possibly work so completely in the spirit of the time in which that church was built that their work shall not completely falsify the reconstructed ideal. There are undoubtedly men of taste and erudition in Italy as well as elsewhere, and they have not failed to cry out against the taste shown in the previous restoration of St. Mark's. The journals have not all been dumb on this topic either; but it seems that all the outcry has resulted in nothing, for the work goes on. If there are better men in Venice, why were they not put to work before the vast areas of inimitable and irreplaceable old mosaics already destroyed were hammered down? What boots it to tell us of Italian taste when we see such fruit of it? It is not in their municipal councils as in their communal architects. The taste that desires to see the Duomo of Florence whitened like a new tombstone, is on a par with the reverence which would remove every trace of the ancient sculptor's hand to make it white, and these leave no room for discussion.

But another journal cries out in its wrath, "Shall we not do what we like with our own?" To say that the Italian Government has not legally and potentially the faculty of pulling down every old church in Italy would be absurd: it may pitch St. Mark's into the lagoons if it will, as it may close every museum and gallery to the stranger who comes here; but the inevitable result would be that the stranger would come no longer; and *morally*, it has no more right to destroy St. Mark's, or injure it, than the Greeks would have to sweep away the remains of the Parthenon, to build a new town-hall: and no Italian would admit them that.

That something must be done at no distant time to preserve the integrity of the façade of St. Mark's is very true; but what is needed is not what has been done hitherto. Any grave injury is still far off, and all repairing up to this must have been irreparable damage. The Italian Government has doubtless the means and sources of information necessary to avert all danger: what it owes the civilised world is to employ those means, and prevent the curing of one evil by the perpetration of a greater one. The appliances of modern engineering science are equal to the raising of St. Mark's bodily, and building new foundations under it, if necessary: compared to which all that needs to be done to secure stability of the menaced piers is a trifle.

But the Italian Government should go further, and assume the protection of all the buildings of artistic interest, as against the

ignorance and barbarism of municipal councils and jobbing architects. All over Italy are scattered monuments of greater or less importance committed to the discretion of bodies of men whose powers, the delegation of popular suffrage, are at present the arbiter of the destiny and duration of remains whose relative importance no one in any connection with the municipality is competent to determine, and through whose whims, or ambition to do something to give occupation to the unemployed, we may owe the destruction any day of what neither time nor money can replace. If there be, as I doubt not there is, a competent archæological authority in Italy, let it be put in charge of the public monuments, with such power that no demolition or restoration shall take place without its knowledge and consent. The outside world does not ask the right of intervention, but that Italy should do what reverence for her own past would dictate without the need of foreign suggestion. The whole of Italy is a book full of important records for archæology and mediæval history, not half of whose pages are yet read satisfactorily; the interest of Italians, even more than of Englishmen, would seem to be to provide that by no act of ignorance or barbarism should one of those pages be defaced. If Italians find in the expression of this desire, or the outcry which the almost daily sacrilege committed by the municipalities has called out, any derogation to their dignity as citizens of a free state, they must have singular ideas of their relations with the rest of the world. If they continue in the tone of angry defiance of all remonstrance from without, which is (with, as I have said, some important and honourable exceptions in the press and personality of the kingdom) the general reply to the feeling expressed with reference to St. Mark's, they may have no worse result than that all lovers of art or history may pray that the Austrians may come back again. But if, in defiance of everything, they go on with the course of destruction which has marked the few past years, there is one consequence they may look forward to with certainty—that all foreigners of taste will henceforward and for ever forego their pilgrimages to the no longer sacred places of Italy. If Italians are wise, they will not kill the only fowl of the golden-egg age left them.

On the other side, something might be said of the *mutual* obligations of Italy and civilisation. If the right preservation of the monuments of Italy is so important to all lovers of art, let them also do something to aid in this right preservation, not by taking, or attempting to take, the work out of Italian hands, but contributing from that wealth which is much more abundant in England than in Italy, something to have it properly done under the care of those Italians who may be found competent. Here may be a practical work for the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Monuments.

Mademoiselle de Mersac.

CHAPTER XXXI.

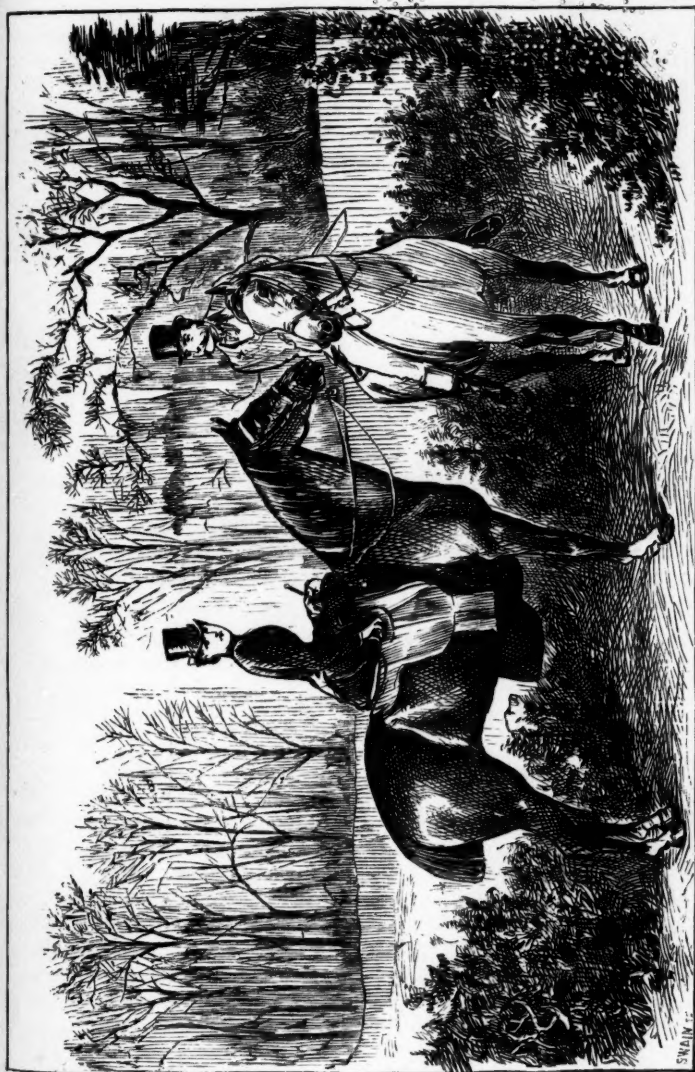
JEANNE IS SHOWN THE SCENERY OF SURREY.



I F everyone were compelled, by some irresistible force, to state what had been the happiest period of his or her life, what odd, pathetic revelations would be made, and what unlooked-for confirmation certain threadbare truisms would receive! For, in deed, what all say, and few believe, is, after all, the truth—that happiness is no

more to be commanded than success; that neither health, wealth, rank, nor glory can bestow it; and that he who sets it before himself as his chief object in life is absolutely certain to miss his end.

Now it came to pass that, in the month of December 1870, our heroine, in whose character selfishness was assuredly no prominent trait, was blessed with two weeks during which all things seemed to go well with her. It is true that what cause she had had for trouble and anxiety remained to her still, for did not every hour bring her nearer to the time when Saint-Luc should come riding back from the wars to claim his bride? And was not Léon, in these same wintry days, campaigning in the chill Loiret country, at the mercy of wind and weather, and of any stray German bullet. But just then Jeanne was enabled to set aside these dismal thoughts and forebodings; and if anyone thinks that such capacity showed any want of feeling on her part, it is clear that that person was never in love, and can, therefore, be no fit judge of her case.



JEANNE IS SHOWN THE SCENERY OF SURREY.

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The chestnut mare, having been duly tried and found tractable, was sent up to the Holmhurst stables for Mademoiselle de Mersac's temporary use. Jeanne demurred at first to this arrangement, but gave way when Mr. Ashley, whose heart had been completely won by the skill of this beautiful young horse-breaker, swore that, unless she did so, he would buy the mare himself of Barrington, and offer her to his niece as a Christmas present. Mrs. Ashley, good, imprudent soul, aided and abetted.

"By all means use the horse, my dear child," said she. "My girls would in a moment, only unfortunately they have no nerve; and Mr. Barrington has more horses and more money than he knows what to do with; and a good gallop will bring the roses into your cheeks, which, I'm sure, they want—not that your complexion isn't lovely, but just a tinge of colour, you know, is an improvement to everybody. And as to hunting, I can't see myself any reason why you shouldn't, except that gentlemen never do *really* like ladies in the hunting-field, whatever they may say; but at any rate you might ride to the meet, and Simpson could bring you home, if you didn't mind; and really it would be the greatest comfort to us all to think that there was some amusement for you here, unless, of course, M. de Saint-Luc had any objection to your riding."

"I do not consult M. de Saint-Luc about such things," said Jeanne, with much dignity. And so the matter was settled.

About this time two phenomena began to be a good deal commented upon by the subscribers to the Surrey Hunt. One of these was the frequent appearance at the meets of a beautiful Frenchwoman—a niece of old Ashley, of Holmhurst, people said—who sat her horse like an Amazon, but never followed the hounds; and the other was the curiously unsportsmanlike conduct of the master of Broadridge. Barrington, whose boast it had ever been that he did nothing by halves, had earned and sustained a good reputation in the hunting-field. Admirably mounted—as a bachelor of his means could well afford to be—riding at once judiciously and boldly, and knowing every inch of the country, it had hitherto been a tolerable certainty that, so long as the hounds were out, he would be with them. But now he seemed to have determined that under no circumstances would he see the end of a run. He seldom missed a meet, it is true; but, whatever may have been the object of his attendance, it was apparently not to pursue the fox that he went out. If perchance a cover were drawn blank, that was quite enough for him; and often he would not even wait long enough to make sure of such a disappointment, but, after a brief interval of impatient fidgeting, would remark to anyone who happened to be near that this kind of thing really wasn't good enough, you know, and that he was going home. Nay, more than once, after getting off well, he was thrown out in the most unaccountable manner, and disappeared, no one knew whither.

Jeanne could have told them what became of the renegade sportsman

on these occasions; and so, for that matter, could Simpson, had he been garrulously given. But Simpson was getting into years, and had learnt to hold his tongue, and, according to his own words, to "keep himself to himself."

Simpson, however, knew all about it. He knew perfectly well, as he shogged slowly along the miry lanes astride one of the carriage-horses, who would presently come thundering up from behind him, or pop over a hedge at his side, and say, with the utmost consideration, "Oh, Simpson, hadn't you better be pushing on towards home? Mrs. Ashley will be wanting you this afternoon, you know, and I will see that the young lady gets back all right. Oh, and Simpson, here's——" And then this corrupt old groom would stretch out his right hand for a moment, withdraw it again, raise it to his hat, with a brisk "Thank ye, sir," and touch his horse with the spur.

He did not chatter about these things when he got back to the stables. He was not the man to judge his betters, or to jump to hasty conclusions because Mr. Barrington and Mamzell chose to ride about the country together for a couple of hours or more, instead of returning direct to Holmhurst. For aught he knew, such ways of going on might be customary in France. And, in the meantime, he was a married man, with a young family, and half-sovereigns were half-sovereigns.

Long afterwards, when Barrington, in confidential intercourse, used to allude to these protracted rides, he was wont to declare that not once, in the course of any of them, had a word passed between him and Mademoiselle de Mersac which might not have been safely uttered in the presence of a third person. Indeed, Jeanne would not, at this time, have permitted her companion to address her as he had once done, in the days of her freedom, in Algiers. But words, which are at best but a poor and inadequate means of expressing thought, may be replaced, as everybody knows, in many effectual ways; and probably those brief December days brought to our two friends as perfect a mutual understanding as they were likely ever to arrive at in this world.

They did not trouble the high road much. Sometimes they rode through winding byways and drowsy little villages; sometimes past farm-houses, where the sound of approaching hoofs set the dogs barking and frightened the ducks and geese from their stagnant pool; sometimes across a ploughed field or a stretch of pasture land. But most of all they liked to breast the steep sides of the chalk hills, and, after a short breathing-space upon the summit, to gallop over the free and rolling downs. Barrington, in his double capacity of an Englishman and a native of Surrey, was very properly anxious to point out the beauties of the wintry landscape to one who otherwise might possibly have failed to appreciate them. The ever-varying nature of the prospect was what he chiefly insisted upon. The attractiveness of scenery, he said, was, after all, almost entirely a question of atmosphere. It was not mere outline, however exquisite, that could satisfy the eye, but light and shade, or, to speak more

correctly, gradations of colour; and the more these shifted and changed, the greater must be the charm of the natural picture; so that, although Surrey had not the grandeur of Algeria, and the English sun was but a poor imitation of the African, yet the wild, rainy winter of these northern latitudes could produce effects unknown in brighter climes; and whether a blustering sou'-wester swept the bare downs under a low, grey sky, or whether there were a touch of frost in the air, and the blue smoke rose straight above the distant homesteads, or whether all the view were softened by a pearly mist, through which pale rays of sunlight struggled here and there, still there was always something in the aspect of this pastoral country to stir the artist's heart, and, almost every day, something fresh.

Barrington discoursed at considerable length in this strain, and said many foolish and affected things, and, every now and then, a true one. If it had pleased him to enlarge upon the origin of species or the meaning of existence, the effect produced upon the mind of his auditor would have been very nearly the same. It was not so much what Barrington said as the sound of his voice that she loved to listen to; and doubtless he might have uttered ten times the number of absurdities that he did without any risk of her thinking him less witty and wise. Jeanne was at this time as nearly happy as it was possible for her to be. She was constantly alone with the man whom she loved; and that was enough for her. Whether he loved her was a question which she had not put to herself since the renewal of her intimacy with him—or, at all events, had not consciously put. Neither had her thoughts reverted to the dream she had once cherished of passing the remainder of her life with him. Her destiny was to marry M. de Saint-Luc, while his might very likely lead him into a union with Helen Ashley, a person entirely unworthy of him. But what was the use of dwelling upon the dark future? Jeanne rejoiced in the present, and troubled herself very little, it is to be feared, about its ultimate issues, whether as regarded herself or others. That she ought to have so troubled herself is not to be denied; but her biographer would humbly submit that he has not intended to represent Mademoiselle de Mersac as a type of feminine perfection.

As for Barrington, his character must indeed have been imperfectly indicated if it be not at once perceived what influence this sort of quasi-friendly intercourse was likely to have upon him. So long as the surface of life was made smooth and easy for this philosopher, he was not the man to search for any germs of possible sorrow that might lie beneath it. He was deeply in love with Jeanne; he luxuriated in the hints and insinuations of his love which opportunity enabled him to indulge in; he had just enough doubt as to her sentiments with regard to him to add zest to his philandering; and as for that determination of making her his wife which he had announced so firmly to his friend Leigh, that might conveniently be put upon the shelf for a season.

And if some extenuation be required for the thoughtless conduct of

these two persons, it may perhaps be found in the fact that those about them threw no sort of obstacle in their path. A matter had to be thrust very close under Mrs. Ashley's nose before she would become aware of it; Mr. Ashley had long since made up his mind, in a dull, vague way, that Barrington was eventually to marry his eldest daughter, and had no fears upon the score of this French niece, who was already engaged to some foreigner or other; and Miss Barrington, who alone saw whither the course of events was tending, had reasons of her own for not choosing to interfere with it. Even Helen, though she was a trifle dissatisfied and jealous, felt no serious alarm; for she had that curiously infatuated belief in the power of her own charms which would appear to be the especial property of fair-haired, lymphatic women.

So it was that Barrington was allowed to ride about the country with Jeanne all day, and to spend nearly every evening at Holmhurst, without let or hindrance.

Now there lived in the neighbourhood a certain big personage, whose name is of no importance to our story, but who, in the lack of a better pseudonym, may be called the Marquis of Carabas; and this nobleman, residing but little upon his Surrey estates, yet anxious, for political and other reasons, to keep on good terms with the landed gentry of the county, great and small, was accustomed, in the month of December, every year, to give a ball, to which, with a large-hearted hospitality, it was his rule to invite the whole of them. To Helen and Blanche Ashley this annual festivity was as important an event as the Derby is to some people and Easter Monday to others. By ancient and prescriptive right, they each received a present of a ball-dress from their father as the time for the event drew near. They talked of it for weeks beforehand, and wondered who would be there with as much eagerness as if there had been the slightest doubt as to the number and names of the guests whom they were to meet. And now nothing would satisfy them but that Jeanne must see to what a pitch of elegance and luxury the Surrey entertainments were capable of reaching.

"You needn't hesitate on account of its making an extra lady," Blanche urged; "because there is always such a crowd that one more or less cannot possibly make any difference; and Lady Carabas is so good-natured and kind. Mamma met her in Westerham the other day, and she said we were to be sure to bring anybody who might be staying in the house. Do come."

"Come!" cried Mrs. Ashley. "Of course she will come. Why should she not? If it is about your being in mourning that you are thinking, my dear, that is of no consequence at all; it is not the custom in England for people to shut themselves up on that account. There were two girls who lived in this neighbourhood—I can't recollect their name just now, but everybody knew them—and their father fell downstairs one evening and broke his neck—such a shocking thing! I always think it is so dreadful for people to meet their death in that kind

of ridiculous manner, because one can't help laughing a little at it, and yet it is quite as bad for them and their relations, you know, as if they had died in their beds, in the ordinary way—not but what it was just as well in this particular case, for I believe the poor man drank terribly, and they said he used to beat his wife. Well, I remember perfectly that, about six weeks, or perhaps it may have been two months afterwards, a charity ball was given at Reigate, and there were those girls, smothered in black crape, but in low dresses—striking, still very becoming to them, I must say, for they had clear white skins, something like yours, my dear; and they made quite a sensation, and a great many people were scandalised, and one of them married an enormously rich man—a timber merchant, or something—immediately afterwards. It *was* a little soon certainly—the ball I mean, not the marriage—but I mention it just to show you that you need not feel any scruple.”

Jeanne explained that, if she declined to be present at the Marchioness of Carabas's ball, it would not be owing to any apprehension of the kind suggested.

“Then you really must come,” said Blanche. And Barrington, who happened to be present, took occasion to add that the whole county would consider itself slighted if Mademoiselle de Mersac refused to countenance its small attempts at gaiety.

“That is very great nonsense,” returned Jeanne, all her old dislike for laboured compliments aroused by this absurd assertion. “I know no one in the county, and no one can miss me if I stay away; but if my friends in Algiers heard that I had gone to a ball at such a time as this, when all our country is in mourning, they would be very angry. And they would be quite right to be angry.”

In truth, things were not looking hopeful for France in those dark December days. The army of the Loire, under General Chanzy, slowly retreating; Ducrot forced back into Paris, neither dead nor victorious; the Government removed to Bordeaux, and King William sitting on his Imperial crown in the palace of Louis XIV.—how could any Frenchwoman be expected to dance in the midst of such troubles?

“I will stay at home with Miss Barrington, and you shall tell me all about the ball the next morning,” said Jeanne. And Miss Barrington nodded her head approvingly.

“You and Mademoiselle de Mersac will be rather dull all by yourselves, Aunt Susan,” remarked Barrington. “I’ve a great mind to cut the ball myself, and to come in and spend the evening with you.”

“You will do nothing of the sort,” returned his aunt, somewhat sharply. “The county really would think itself slighted by your absence—or, at any rate, you believe it would; and you are much too considerate to inflict unnecessary pain upon others. Besides which, you would only interrupt our chat and be in the way here.”

“Thank you very much. I always take it as a compliment when people tell me they don’t want me. It isn’t the sort of thing that

one could say to most men, don't you see, without being misunderstood."

"You have that happy self-conceit, Harry," replied Miss Barrington, "that I believe you would discover some subtle form of flattery in being called a fool. But you certainly do not misunderstand me in the present instance. When I tell you that your room will be preferred to your company on the 18th, I mean what I say."

And so she did. It was her rule to state her wishes in plain terms. She wished, just then, to have a few words with Jeanne; and she knew that this end could hardly be attained so long as her nephew was in the room. When the evening of the ball came, and when, after some delay in the completion of the young ladies' toilettes and a good deal of fidgeting and grumbling on the part of Mr. Ashley, the whole party had at last driven away, she drew a long breath of satisfaction, and pulling her arm-chair up to the fireside, motioned to Jeanne to do likewise.

"Now," said she, "we can talk in peace. Tell me, what do you think of these good people?"

Jeanne was by this time quite accustomed to the old lady's abrupt and rather indiscreet questions. She laughed, and said that everybody in the house had been very kind to her.

"Oh, yes, they are very kind in their way. I don't want to eat their salt, and then speak against them behind their backs, you know. But it is quite possible to be kind, amiable, tolerably well-educated, and hospitable, and at the same time to be a great bore; and I confess that these dear Ashleys bore me. On the other hand, I am such a bore to them that you may be sure they would not have pressed me to stay six weeks in their house if they had not expected to profit by it, sooner or later. Do you know how many god-children I have?"

Jeanne said "No."

"Six-and-twenty—no less than that. They are all of tender years. I never was asked to stand sponsor to a single infant till I was past middle age, and independent, and likely to remain so. Odd, isn't it? Now do you think—I ask you as a friend, you know, and an impartial judge—do you think that Helen would make a suitable wife for Harry?"

Jeanne was not likely to be disconcerted by thrusts of this nature. "I suppose," said she, "that Mr. Barrington will choose his wife for himself."

"Not he! You don't know him, or you would not say that. Two months ago I could have got him to engage himself to Helen Ashley with the greatest ease in the world. In point of fact, I very nearly did it. But one changes one's views very often—at least, I do, I am sorry to say—and now I begin to think that, after all, Helen would hardly do. I regret it, because there certainly was a sort of tacit understanding between me and the Ashleys that the match should be made; but there!—the world is full of disappointments, and they must take their share

like the rest of us. I shall give Helen a couple of dresses and a fifty-pound note, and put her down for a trifle more in my will. I think that will be behaving handsomely. The only difficulty is to find a substitute for her."

"But is it necessary that Mr. Barrington should marry at all?" asked Jeanne, rather amused at the off-hand way in which her friend's future was being mapped out for him.

"That is not the question. He is quite sure to marry, and that before he is much older too. And I think he has taken up a mistaken notion of the whole subject, as men often do. And the truth is, I am fond of Harry—he has been something more than a nephew to me—and I don't want him to make his life miserable by a stupid error."

Jeanne said nothing, but wondered inwardly what might be the mistaken notion that Mr. Barrington had adopted.

"Marriages," resumed Miss Barrington, after a long pause, "are mostly mistakes. I dare say you may think that, as an old maid, I am not very competent to judge; but lookers-on see most of the game, and I know what a mess a great many of my friends have made of it. Sometimes I think that they manage these things better in Chicago, though no doubt that system also has its disadvantages. Anyhow, in this country, a husband and wife can't dissolve their partnership because they don't happen to agree; and, do you know, the longer I live, the more I become convinced that there can be no real happiness in married life without love. That is an old-fashioned idea, I am aware; but I make bold to maintain the truth of it, all the same, and in the face of the fact that a great many men, and nearly all women, think differently—at all events, before marriage."

"We think differently in France," Jeanne observed.

"Yes; and look at the result! Not, of course, that you can know anything about that. You *will* know though, one of these days, if you don't mind what you are about. Now don't look offended, my dear girl, because I am a blunt old woman, and I shall say what I please, when I think it is for your good. Take my word for it, you had better get rid of M. de Saint-Luc while you can. Harry has told me all about him."

"I would rather discuss Mr. Barrington's marriage than my own," said Jeanne.

"I don't see any reason why we should not discuss both; but no matter—yours can stand over for the present. I want to find Harry a wife whom he can love, who will love him in return, and who will have enough tact and self-respect to prevent him from tiring of her in six months. If you should ever come across such a person, it would be a friendly act on your part to beg her to put herself in communication with me. I am going away the day after to-morrow."

"So soon!" ejaculated Jeanne, her breath rather taken away by the suddenness with which this intended move was announced.

"Yes. I have had enough, and more than enough, of Holmhurst for

the present; and really it is time for me to visit another of my twenty-six god-children. After the new year, I shall go to my own house in London; and then I want you to come and stay with me. Will you come?"

"I should like it very much," answered Jeanne, rather hesitatingly—"that is, if my uncle and aunt have no objection."

"Good gracious me! what objection could they have? I should like to hear them object to anything that I proposed! You need not be afraid of finding London dull. I see a good many people of one kind and another, and you will not be left very much alone with me. I shouldn't wonder if Harry were to come up to town in January. I know he means to leave this before Christmas. Well, then, that is all settled. And now I am going off to bed."

Miss Barrington accordingly collected her work, her spectacles, the book that she was reading, and her other belongings, and departed. But Jeanne sat staring into the fire, thinking, wondering, and doubting within herself, until at length the revellers returned from their ball, the elders yawning, but the young people still excited and voluble.

Helen was in the best of tempers and spirits. She had, it appeared, achieved a signal success. Her card had been filled up within five minutes of her entrance into the ball-room; old Lord Carabas had trotted up to her, and complimented her upon her blooming complexion. "Rather impertinent of him, wasn't it? But I suppose one ought not to mind that kind of thing from an old gentleman," said the pleased Helen. Mr. Barrington had made himself especially agreeable, and she had danced with him three times—oh, no, not five times, Blanche—certainly not—well, perhaps it might have been four. And so forth, and so forth.

The retrospect lasted a good half-hour; and at the end of it, Jeanne, seeking the solitude of her own room, sat down to think over the events of the evening, and to wonder what the end of all this would be. For her, if for no one else, she was beginning to perceive that there was every appearance, at present, of troubles ahead.

CHAPTER XXXII.

IN WHICH BARRINGTON DOES A GREAT DEAL OF TALKING.

MISS BARRINGTON proved as good as her word. Two days after the ball she bade a cordial farewell to her friends at Holmhurst, and drove away from the door, her prim, elderly maid facing her on the back seat of the carriage, and her neat luggage following in a cart, under the charge of two servants. The number of hitherto invisible retainers who started up to render Miss Barrington some small service, on the last day of her sojourn in any country-house, was something astonishing; but she did not object to the practice, and, indeed, had done something to encourage

it, holding, as she did, that one of the few unmixed delights that accrue to the possessor of a full purse is that of indiscriminate tipping.

The Ashleys, one and all, bemoaned her departure loudly; and a perceptible gloom fell upon the household after she had gone. But was this owing solely to grief over the loss of their guest, or had her casual remark that she expected Mademoiselle de Mersac to pay her a visit, early in the ensuing month, anything to do with it? It is a fact that Helen had been given to suppose that she, and not her cousin, was to have been thus favoured; and if this unexpected change of programme produced some feeling of soreness and disappointment in her breast, and a little anxiety in that of her parents, who can blame them?

It must, at all events, be recorded to their credit that they vented none of the ill-humour they may have felt upon Jeanne, but were only a trifle silent and dispirited during the remainder of the day. Miss Barrington, as they all knew, was a capricious old person, liable to all kinds of passing fancies, which those who valued her friendship must needs put up with. It was certainly not a little vexatious that she should have chosen to defraud Helen of her visit to London, but that she might be contemplating the far more serious injury of robbing her of her potential husband was a notion that had not as yet suggested itself to any one of them.

And to Helen, at any rate, joy came in the morning. For upon her plate at breakfast-time she found a very kind note from her god-mother, enclosing a cheque for fifty pounds, and at the same time requesting her to order for herself, by way of a Christmas present, two dresses, with regard to the materials and trimmings of which no restriction was laid upon her. The same post brought a little pile of foreign letters to Jeanne, two of which were evidently from M. de Fontvieille and from her brother's bailiff respectively.

Pierre Cauvin's composition was in the highest degree creditable to him. The style of it was ornate, the orthography ingenious if somewhat peculiar, and the absence of erasures testified that the whole production was probably the result of more than one rough copy. He began by offering humble thanks to Providence for his continued preservation in good health, and likewise for that of all his subordinates, whom he made it a point to mention severally, so that the first page of his letter, with its long string of harshly-sounding Arab names, read not unlike one of the genealogical chapters of the New Testament. This duty accomplished, he went on to express a respectful hope that mademoiselle had not suffered from the effects of the bleak climate of the north. He had taken some pains, he said, since mademoiselle's departure, to discover whether the English winter were as formidable as it had been represented, and had gained a little reassuring information from the captain of a yacht which had lately come into harbour. "He is a native of Cahousse, in the island of Ouaïte," wrote Pierre, "which, according to him, is one of the British Isles, though I have not been able to discover

it upon the map. He tells me that in his part of the country snow and frost are seldom seen, but I have remarked that the stories of sailors should be received with caution. This one would have me believe, for instance, that, during the summer months, there are often as many as a hundred yachts such as his master's—a vessel, mademoiselle, fitted up with inconceivable luxury—lying off the little town where he lives, and that this is but a small fraction of the number of pleasure-ships that carry the English flag. I answer him nothing; but mademoiselle is aware that an Auvergnat is not the man to let himself be taken in by an Englishman. I ask pardon of mademoiselle if I seem to speak disrespectfully of the nation to which madame her honoured mother belonged; but the truth is that *Messieurs les Anglais ne sont pas malins*—(the phrase is hardly to be translated satisfactorily). “We have but few of them here, this winter, owing to the war; and the shopkeepers and landlords complain much of their absence. The country, mademoiselle, continues to rejoice in a profound tranquillity. The Arabs have not moved as yet; but one must not trust too much to them. The autumn rains have answered to our utmost hopes”—&c. &c. &c. At this point Pierre entered upon agricultural topics, and fell into a more vernacular strain of language.

M. de Fontvieille wrote somewhat despondently. He was very lonely, he said, very dull, and old age was gaining upon him every day. He had no longer the slightest hope of any successful termination to the war, and foresaw yet worse troubles looming on the horizon. Why he had been destined to live on into these bad times, after nearly all his contemporaries had been removed, was more than he could understand; and he should pray for the end, were it not that he longed to embrace his beloved children once more. He cheered up a little, however, on the last page, and related, with manifest glee, how he had purchased a magnificent pearl necklace from a distressed Moor, and with what crafty devices he had managed to get the better of that needy unbeliever.

And now Jeanne had to open her third letter, which she had reserved for the last, not upon the schoolboy's principle of pudding first and plums afterwards, but rather because she had feared that, had she read this letter before the others, the remembrance of it would probably have entirely marred her enjoyment of them, for she had seen at once that it was from M. de Saint-Luc.

After all, it proved to be only a friendly, but formal reply to one which, in a fit of compunction, she had addressed to him soon after her arrival in England. It opened with “Dear Mademoiselle,” and closed with an assurance of the writer's respectful homage; it contained little information of a personal kind, except the modest mention of a slight wound, already nearly healed, and a pardonable self-congratulation upon the conduct of the regiment, which was now serving under General Bourbaki; it dwelt at some length upon the gallantry and cheerful endurance displayed by Léon; it touched briefly upon the prospects of

the campaign ; and was, in short, as unlike the missive of a lover to his affianced bride as anything could well be. Nothing could have been more discreet, nothing less calculated to ruffle the susceptibilities of the lady to whom it was addressed ; yet, in spite of its matter-of-fact tone—perhaps in consequence of it—it caused Jeanne to feel some sharp twinges of conscience.

It was not because her whole heart belonged to Barrington that she reproached herself : she had been quite clear in her mind, from the first, that nothing in the nature of love was due from her to M. de Saint-Luc. Nor did she deem herself much to blame in that she had left her future husband for so long without any direct news of her or inquiry after his safety. But what troubled her was an uneasy feeling that this man, whom she had always despised, was treating her with a generosity which she had certainly not deserved at his hands. Hitherto she had looked forward to her marriage simply and solely with reference to its bearing upon Léon's fortunes and her own. Of M. de Saint-Luc she had thought as little as a patient for whom leeches have been prescribed is apt to think of the suffering in store for those loathsome creatures, who, however, have obviously not altogether the best of it in the unpleasant business. To her he had been only a means—and a most distasteful means—towards an end. But now she began to wonder whether, after all, it were worthy of her, or even just, to regard him in this light. M. de Fontvieille and the Curé of El Biar had both given her to understand—though not, perhaps, in so many words—that it was permissible to marry one man and to love another ; but when they had thus soothed her scruples, that other had been many hundred miles away, which certainly made a difference. Neither of them would have been likely to sanction those long rides of which mention has been made ; even less would they have approved of the dialogues between their protégée and the Englishman, in which so little of importance was said, and so much inferred. The truth was that Jeanne had, for some time, been unconsciously stifling a conviction that out of all this some issue must come ; that she would scarcely be able to part from Barrington without some sort of mutual avowal ; and Saint-Luc's letter was but as a flash of additional light thrown suddenly upon the point from which she had, until now, sedulously averted her eyes. Not that she actually faced it even yet. She did not say to herself that Barrington loved her, or that he must have conjectured what her feelings were towards him. She did not dwell upon the thought that, if he and she were really all in all to one another, nothing—not even Léon's interests—ought to keep them apart. How could she, when the man whom she loved had as yet given her no right to do so ? But, as the upshot of a good deal of confused and perplexed self-communing, she did determine that the chestnut mare should return forthwith to the Broad-ridge stables, where, if she had only known it, Barrington and Leigh were, at that very moment, deep in a conversation, in the course of which her name had recurred at tolerably frequent intervals.

The two friends had visited every stall and loose-box, had duly criticised the condition of their occupants, had seen some of the horses go out for exercise, and now Leigh had seated himself upon an upturned bucket before the stable-door, and was puffing at a short wooden pipe while, with half-closed eyes and patient mien, he listened to a protracted discourse from his host, who was pacing to and fro as he talked, and pausing, every now and then, in front of his auditor, to emphasize a point or round a period.

"I admit the justice of your arguments," the orator was saying—"I admit that there are serious objections to my marrying a lady who is not English by birth, and who will of course be, all her life, more or less under the influence of the priests. I don't mind going even further, and allowing that there are certain subjects upon which she and I might very possibly not find ourselves in complete sympathy. Moreover, I fully agree with you in thinking that such a girl as Helen Ashley is far better fitted to become the wife of an English country-gentleman than Mademoiselle de Mersac, and that, in the matter of marriage, a wise man will pay more heed to the long years to come than to the passion of the present."

"Didn't know I'd said all that," remarked Leigh, parenthetically; "but it sounds very sensible."

"It is sensible, and therefore you said it. Or else you said it, and therefore it is sensible. A Yarmouth bloater is not more impregnated with salt than you are with common sense. You are the best of fellows, my dear old Leigh, but you are a Philistine of the Philistines."

"Ah, I don't understand that kind of slang; but if a Philistine means a man who does his best to see facts as they are, instead of perpetually trying to mystify himself and everybody about him, I glory in being one."

"Of course you do, and quite right too. I never said there weren't good points about a Philistine. We are what we are; we can't help our natures, and may as well be proud of our several excellences. I, for instance, am not commonplace, and I am glad of it. Jeanne is not commonplace; our intercourse has not been commonplace; and why, in Heaven's name, are we to hurry it into a commonplace ending?"

Leigh knocked out the ashes from his pipe against the heel of his boot, and looked up with an air of wearied toleration.

"If I can make out what you are driving at, may I be—married myself!" he ejaculated. "When you began to talk, I certainly understood that what you were arguing to prove was that you would be doing a wise thing in marrying this French girl, though the rest of the world would probably think otherwise. Now, as far as I can see, you are protesting against such a 'commonplace' notion. But, if you don't intend marriage, what on earth *do* you intend? You say you are not going in for a mere flirtation; you are for ever swearing that you can't live without the girl; and yet, you know, you won't be able to go on galloping

about the country with her, and larking over fences till the end of your life, unless you get at least as far as an engagement. And in the meantime, as a matter of detail, she happens to be engaged to another fellow.'

Mr. Leigh stated the case quite correctly. His friend had, indeed, shifted his ground in the course of argument, as was habitual with him; but Barrington was not the man to be put out by any charge of inconsistency. He simply ignored it, and proceeded to follow out his train of thought.

"No doubt," said he, "we shall settle down, some day, as Mr. and Mrs. Barrington, and have people here to stay with us, and ask the neighbours to dinner once a month, and go to church on Sundays—no, by-the-by, I suppose we shall not go to church together. All that will be very delightful, and I ask for nothing better; only don't you see that, when that time comes, there will be an end to the 'schöne Liebeszeit?' Marriage, which to people of your stamp is the goal and crown of all love-making, is to me simply the death-blow of romance. Not of love, mind you—I don't say that—but unquestionably of one of the subtlest charms of love. Remove the element of uncertainty, and you enter upon an entirely new phase of the sentiment. I am uncertain now, and I rejoice in being so. Suppose I were to ask Jeanne point-blank to-day to be my wife, how do I know that she would not refuse me? How do I know that she would not consider herself bound in honour to this broken-down *viveur* whom her friends have driven her into accepting? And there again is another argument against hurry. It is quite even betting that M. de Saint-Luc gets knocked on the head before the war is over; and if that happy deliverance should come about, I could step into his place with much greater propriety and less fuss, don't you see? But the fact is, Leigh, that you and I should never see these questions in the same light if we were to talk till Doomsday. Your idea of happiness is a bachelor life. Failing that, you would like to get your courtship over as quickly as possible, and take a fresh start as a pattern husband and father. Your ideal world is a pleasant, fertile valley, neatly marked out into pastures and ploughed fields, with flocks and herds, and crops in due season. You would be quite content to plod along it, in a steady, equable way, for the remainder of your days; and all the time you would be so engrossed in watching your prosperity increase, and your children growing up like what's-his-names about your table, that you would never once raise your eyes to the measureless blue overhead where the skylarks are trilling, or to the heights where, far removed from the confused chatter, and oaths, and groans, and laughter of men, the snowy summits sleep on, in calm beauty and grandeur, from century to century."

"The right honourable gentleman resumed his seat amidst prolonged cheering, and the proceedings, which had lasted up to an advanced hour, then terminated."

That was all the response that Barrington got from his confidant, who now rose, and sauntered away towards the house. But when he had gone some ten paces on his way, he faced about, and called out—

"I say, are you really off the day after to-morrow?"

"Yes; I believe so."

"Oh! Well, it's no business of mine, and I don't suppose for a moment that you will be guided by me; but, if I were you, I would have something settled definitely, one way or the other, before I went." And, with these parting words of advice, Mr. Leigh vanished.

As for Barrington, he shrugged his shoulders with a slight deprecating smile, as who should say, "What else could you expect? Does a thorn bear grapes, or a thistle figs?"—and shortly afterwards, mounting his horse, rode across the park towards Holmhurst.

He congratulated himself upon his good fortune when he found Jeanne alone in the library; but the manner of his reception was scarcely what he had anticipated. Jeanne was feeling a little nervous and disturbed in mind; and when Mr. Barrington was announced, wished, perhaps for the first time in her life, that he were away. But as there was no getting rid of his physical presence, she set herself to put him at a moral distance—a task never very difficult to her. She laid aside the half-written letter upon which she had been engaged, rose, shook hands, and resumed her seat with a certain chilly dignity of demeanour which had often damped Barrington's spirits before now. He did not, however, choose to notice it, but drew a chair up beside hers, and remarked that it was a beautiful day, and that he hoped she was coming out for a ride. She said no; she did not think she would be able to ride that day.

"What a bore!" exclaimed Barrington. "I did hope we should have managed a ride this afternoon, because I don't know when our next one will be. To-morrow I am obliged to do a little justicing, and the day after I have got to go away on a long-promised visit to some friends."

"Your aunt told me you would be going away soon," Jeanne observed.

"Yes. I wish to goodness I wasn't; but I can't get out of it now, I'm afraid. We shall meet again though, before very long, I hope."

To this no reply was forthcoming.

"You *are* going to stay with my aunt in January, are you not?" Barrington asked, rather anxiously.

"Perhaps. I have not thought much about it yet. I suppose your friend Mr. Leigh goes away too?"

"Leigh? Oh, yes, he goes, of course. It is a great nuisance. I wish I had not engaged myself to these people."

"Oh, you are sure to enjoy yourself when once you are away," said Jeanne. "But we shall all miss you both," she added politely.

Barrington grunted. "I don't care about being missed in that

collective sort of way," he said. After which there was silence for a few moments.

"You will give Zephyr a gallop every day I hope," resumed Barrington, presently. Zephyr was the name of the chestnut mare.

"I think not. I made up my mind this morning, before you came, that I would not ride any more."

Was Barrington very much to be blamed if he fancied that his approaching departure might have something to do with this resolution?

"Riding all by oneself is dull work, certainly," he said, while a satisfied smile, which he could not altogether repress, gathered about the corners of his mouth.

"I like riding alone," answered Jeanne. "I have been accustomed to be left to myself all my life, and I often think it is much pleasanter not to be obliged to talk to somebody. But, for several reasons, I do not wish to use your horse any longer. You have been very kind to allow me to keep her all this time."

"Might one venture to ask your reasons?" Barrington inquired.

"Well, one of them is that I am afraid I have not been enough with my cousins lately. They must have thought it rather rude in me to leave them as I have done. And, besides, I am sure it is not right to make use of another person's horse as if it were one's own. What should I do if any accident happened?"

Barrington protested that he had not the slightest fear of any harm coming to his property while under such skilled guidance as that of Mademoiselle de Mersac; and moreover that the safety of Zephyr was a matter of complete indifference to him, so long as that of her rider was not endangered, and a good deal more to the same effect; but Jeanne was not to be shaken, and at last closed the discussion by a decisive, "I am very much obliged to you, but I do not intend to ride Zephyr again."

"You are not yourself this morning," said Barrington, abruptly. "Is anything the matter?"

"No. At least nothing particular. It is only that I have had letters from France."

"No bad news of your brother, I trust. Was your letter from him?"

"No; it was from—somebody else." (M. de Saint-Luc's name had not once been mentioned between these two people since the day of their first meeting in Broadridge Park.) "But Léon is quite well, I am thankful to say. It is not that."

"I suppose it is about somebody else's safety, then, that you feel anxious," suggested Barrington, in a somewhat altered voice.

"I am not anxious at all," answered Jeanne; "not more so, that is, than I have been ever since Léon left me; only I feel that I have been enjoying myself too much. I cannot exactly explain what I mean; but

you would understand if you were in my place. One does not really forget," she continued, speaking more to herself than to her listener. "One's heart does not ache the less because one talks and laughs like other people; but yet it seems a shameful thing, and almost a treachery to the absent, that one should be pleased and amused so easily. How terrible it is to think that, at this very moment, Léon may be lying wounded, with nobody to take care of him! And M. de Saint-Luc too," she added, with a visible effort.

Barrington was not in the least jealous. That quick sympathy and profound acquaintance with human nature which he especially prided himself upon enabled him to surmise, without any difficulty, what Jeanne's present frame of mind was, and what had led her into it. She had a tender conscience and a keen sense of duty, he thought; and for these fine qualities he magnanimously admired her the more. Still it would not do to let her fall under the sway of an exaggerated self-distrust.

"Oh, but you must not torment yourself in that manner," said he, cheerfully; "because that is quite a wrong way of looking at things. If you were to shut yourself up in your room all day, and speak to nobody, who would be the better for it? Do you think it would increase your brother's happiness to know that you were making yourself miserable? Or do you suppose him so silly as to imagine that you do not care for him, because you can still enjoy a gallop in the fresh air? It would be as reasonable to say that there was treachery in admiring a beautiful sunset—or music—or pictures."

But Jeanne shook her head. "It is useless to make excuses like that," she sighed, a little impatiently. "I am sure it has been all wrong from beginning to end. I wish, I *wish* they had let me stay at home in Algiers!"

"I am sorry you wish that," said Barrington, in a low voice. "Though perhaps," he added presently, "I have more reason to wish it than you."

He glanced up as he spoke, and found Jeanne's great, serious eyes turned full upon him. And then there passed between them a long look—one of those looks which it is so exceedingly reprehensible for a young man to indulge in, seeing that he may thus acquire knowledge to which he has no fair right without committing himself to words.

It was not the first time that Barrington had thus interrogated Jeanne's eyes; and now, perhaps, they could tell him little that he did not already know. Once before, it may be remembered, he had found himself in a somewhat similar situation, and had lost his head, and said something—he hardly remembered what. And then Madame de Breuil had come in, leaning on her stick, and had brought him to his senses in a trice. No such calming apparition was required to keep his lips closed upon the present occasion. To give Barrington his due, it was not out of prudence, nor from any misgivings as to the strength of his purpose,

that he remained silent, but in part owing to the motives which he had avowed to Leigh earlier in the day, and in a still greater degree, because he was really uncertain how Jeanne, in her present temper, would be likely to receive an open declaration of love. It was quite within the limits of possibility that she might take it as an insult. He looked volumes, therefore, and said nothing; and presently Mademoiselle de Mersac herself dispelled the tension of the moment in the most unromantic manner in the world. She called Turco, who, all this time, had been sleeping peacefully under the table; and, as the huge brute came out, stretching himself and wagging his tail lazily—"He has got something wrong with his ear," said she. "I wish you would look at it, and tell me what you think is the matter."

After that, there was no further danger of a distressing scene. Who could revert to heroics after reporting upon the condition of a dog's ear? Barrington, half-relieved, half-vexed, went down upon his knees, made the necessary investigations, delivered his opinion, and was about to sit down again, when the Miss Ashleys came in, rosy and radiant, from their morning walk, and cordially begged him to stay to luncheon.

He spent another two hours, or more, in the house, but he was not permitted to be alone again with Jeanne. He bade her good-bye in the presence of the whole Ashley family, and, with their eyes upon him, did not dare to say more than—

"It is not good-bye for long, though, I hope. If I am not back here in the course of a week or two, we shall be sure, at least, to meet in London."

To which Jeanne, with a perfectly unmoved countenance, responded, "I hope we may—if I go there."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

ON THE MARCH.

BARRINGTON was so accustomed to being missed whenever he went away, and he himself regretted so much the necessity of leaving home just now, that he almost apologised to his friends at Holmhurst as he shook hands with them all, and bade them farewell for a time. But in truth the loss of his society afflicted nobody very greatly at this especial juncture. Jeanne was thankful to be relieved from a position of which the falseness had at last fully dawned upon her; Mr. and Mrs. Ashley were beginning to suspect that their daughter's nose had been a little put out of joint of late by her magnificent cousin; and Helen herself, having no doubt whatever upon this point, hailed the change with positive joy. Moreover, Christmas was at hand; and that alone was sufficient to keep the thoughts and the fingers of the whole family occupied.

Everybody above the age of eighteen hates Christmas, and now-a-days

everybody says so; but Holmhurst was in all things some twenty or thirty years behind time, and to have suggested in that house that the last week of December and the first of January were not the two merriest of the whole twelvemonth, would have been almost tantamount to a confession of atheism. The jollity of the season, so far as the actual members of the household were concerned, took, it must be confessed, a somewhat heavy and substantial form; still, such as it was, they welcomed it for old associations' sake, and if it brought them no other blessing, the preparations for it provided them at least with plenty of work. There were blankets to be counted, flannel petticoats to be made, and toys to be selected for the school-children's Christmas-tree, not to speak of the church decorations, which were always elaborate, and which the rector's wife, being fat and lazy, gladly handed over to the care of "those dear, good Ashley girls." And besides all this, every room in the house had to be got ready for the annual visit of certain uncles, aunts, and cousins, some of whom were asked because they were well-to-do, and others because they were conspicuously the reverse; for Mr. Ashley prided himself upon observing all the old traditions of Christmas, even down to the entertaining of poor relations. Jeanne helped with the flannel petticoats, and earned some praise by her neat and speedy workmanship.

"I learnt to sew quickly during the summer," she explained, in answer to some expressions of surprise from her cousins. "We had a great deal of work to do for the wounded, and there was not always much time to spare."

"If I had a brother, or a—or anybody I cared a great deal for at the war," said Helen, "I should go off to France at once as a nurse, so as to be ready to take care of him when he was wounded."

"Perhaps he wouldn't be wounded," remarked Jeanne.

"Oh, he would be sure to be, sooner or later. At least, I don't mean that—only I should like to be there in case, you know."

"One must learn nursing before one can be of any use."

"And Helen always turns faint at the sight of blood," put in Blanche. "The other day a man in the village got dreadfully hurt by a threshing machine, and of course they insisted upon our seeing him, as people in that rank of life always do; and Helen pushed me into the room first, and stood close behind me with her eyes shut the whole time—you know you did, Helen."

"I don't enjoy looking at horrid things," confessed Helen; "but of course I could do it if it were really necessary."

"I suppose we can all do what we are obliged to do," observed Jeanne. "One says things are impossible; but they have to be done, and somehow they are done. This time last year I should have thought it quite impossible to live as I am doing now, knowing that Léon is in constant danger and not even having a letter from him for weeks; and yet here I am, you see, and I can eat and sleep easily enough, and help you to make petticoats."

"Yes, and flirt with young men, who by rights should belong to others, too," poor Helen may have thought; but she only said, "You must often be anxious in this bitter weather."

"I try not to think about it; it is no use imagining things. When I heard last they were at Bourges, where at least they would have four walls and a roof to protect them. I try to hope they are there still."

It was as well that she could not see her brother at that particular moment. Had she been able to do so, there would have been an end of her petticoat-making for the rest of the afternoon; for in truth she had never let her mind dwell much upon the details of campaigning, and could hardly have borne to think of Léon as actually suffering from cold or hunger. The reader, however, being presumably more callous, will hardly object to turn away for a time from our heroine, as she sits before the fire with her needlework in her hand, her cousins' unending chatter in her ears, and her own thoughts in her mind, and to pay a flying visit to two other personages of the story, who have been out of sight for some months, and whom he will find working out their destiny under much less comfortable circumstances.

Far south of Holmhurst, in wealthy, grape-bearing Burgundy, the scene, in these last days of 1870, is as wintry as a Siberian view and as cheerless as the prospects of France. Hill and valley, field and vineyard, lie buried beneath the snow. From the sky, leaden overhead, but growing inky towards the horizon, a few flakes are still falling, driven before a moaning wind which raises eddying white columns from the ground as it sweeps on, and lays bare the boughs of the sparse trees. Across this melancholy landscape an enormous railway-train, composed almost entirely of cattle-trucks and vans, and dragged by two puffing engines, is slowly, very slowly making its way. Gradually it slackens speed, while the leading engine sends forth a prolonged whistle—for the signals of a wayside station have just come in sight—and soon it comes to a standstill altogether. The loosely-coupled trucks bump one against the other; the hiss of the escaping steam dies away; the engines join in one last discordant shriek; and then all is still. But ere long a murmur of growls and maledictions begins to make itself heard. "Accursed railways of the devil! here is the tenth stoppage in the course of fifteen miles. If they can't advance, why don't they let us get out and march!"—" *Nom de Dieu!* is it worth while to bring a man all the way from Perpignan to freeze to death in a horse-box? They would have done better to shoot us all at home; it would have been sooner over and have cost less."—"Ah, when I told you that these station-masters have all come to a good understanding with the Prussians! It is to give their dear friends time to retreat at their ease that they keep us here starving of hunger and cold." Lean, dirty faces peer out through the unglazed apertures which do duty for windows; hoarse grumbings grow louder and louder. "Go on then—never mind the signals!"—"Are we to stay here all night?"—"What are you waiting

for? The enemy!"—"En avant, sacrebleu! en avant!" Finally the wag of the crowd pipes out, in feeble imitation of the sonorous warning familiar to more fortunate travellers, "*Les voyageurs pour la ligne de Besançon, Belfort, Berlin, en voitu-r-e!*" Whereat there is a shrill chorus of laughter, for it does not take much to amuse the French soldier, and when want and suffering have done their worst upon him, his indomitable good humour will still come bravely to the front.

These men had been already twelve hours cramped up in their miserable boxes, with nothing to eat but mouldy biscuit, nothing to drink but water, and no plentiful supply of either. Some of them had their fingers and toes frost-bitten, many were ill, a few dying, or near it. They were an undisciplined lot for the most part, but they neither did nor said anything much worse than has been recorded. In a third-class carriage, near the front of the train, were a handful of officers—a colonel of cavalry, wrapped in his cloak and sleeping profoundly; an engineer, in spectacles; a major of artillery; a fat doctor, and a few young men wearing a species of uniform which might have belonged to any branch of the service. One of the latter put his head out of the window and hailed a passing guard.

"What is it now? What are we stopping for?"

"How should I know?" returned the man, sulkily, with a jerk of his shoulders, and slouched on to talk to the engine-driver. Officers were held in no great respect in France in those evil days; even their own men did not always take the trouble to salute them; and when one is only a lieutenant in a *corps franc*, one must not be too punctilious. The snubbed questioner withdrew his head quite meekly, and sank back upon the wooden seat with a gesture of mute resignation.

"You don't happen to have a cigarette about you, do you, de Mersac?" asked his opposite neighbour.

"Not I. Nor anything to drink either. Nor anything to eat, if you come to that."

"Good. Precisely my own condition. And the worst of it is that I am much too cold to sleep."

"All that would be nothing if there were any necessity for it; but to think that all this time we might just as well have been at Bourges! that we are sent into action almost too weak to sit upon our horses simply because we are governed by a set of dolts who imagine that they can despatch an army from one place to another as easily as a telegram!"

"Ah, the old story! Twenty thousand men are wanted to cut off the Prussian communications in the east. Nothing easier—make it forty thousand, so as to leave a margin. March them all down to the station double-quick; send off train after train as fast as they can be got ready; get the line hopelessly blocked; and then trust in Providence to put things straight somehow or other, and set to work composing proclamations. That is the way to carry on war according to the great citizen Gambetta. I wish I had him here!"

"Patience, young men, patience," said the fat doctor, placidly. "Be thankful that you have still all your limbs about you. You will see the Germans soon enough, never fear!"

"That we certainly shall not, if we are to perish of cold in a railway carriage like so many flies." But at this moment another loud whistle pierced the air; the train began to move again, and the jerk awoke the sleeping colonel, who drew down his legs, rubbed his eyes, and asked, "Where are we? At Autun?"

"God knows," answered the artilleryman. "Are we going to Autun? Apropos, M. de Saint-Luc, have you any idea where we *are* going?"

"Not much. I have my own impressions; but I have been told next to nothing officially."

"The report at Bourges was that our destination was to be Besançon."

"I don't know what we should do when we got there."

The gunner shrugged his shoulders; but one of the younger officers struck in eagerly—"We should invade Germany—at least that is what everybody is saying. It is only a question of one victory after all. We raise the siege of Belfort, we intercept the enemy's communications, and we relieve Paris."

"I see."

There was still a little spirit left among those who had fought so well and been beaten so often, a little confidence in their rulers, a lingering grain of faith in Fortune. Léon and his brother officers soon forgot all the sufferings of the present in proving to one another the feasibility of some such surprise as the gossips of Bourges had prophesied. Saint-Luc smiled as he listened to them, but took no part in the discussion. He himself, knowing something of soldiering and of the state of Bourbaki's army, had despaired long since; but it was not for him to discourage others, nor was he the less ready to struggle on to the end.

"In the meantime," said he at last, "let us hope that our next stoppage may be at a town where we can get some food for ourselves and for our horses; for if we go on at our present pace, we shall hardly reach Besançon before the day after to-morrow."

Their deliverance, however, was at hand. At a small wayside station the Éclaireurs received orders to leave the train; and the colonel had his work cut out for him to collect his men and get his shivering horses upon terra firma. Some of the latter had died upon the journey; others had to be abandoned; many of the men were found unable to stand, and were told to remain where they were. It was no very formidable body that moved away at length from the station towards the village whose name it bore, but which lay some two miles away from it. Saint-Luc admitted none but old soldiers into his corps—the nature of their service as scouts demanding experience as well as courage—and he had had proofs enough that those who rode behind him could do and bear as much as can be expected of mortals; nevertheless, as he glanced over his

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shoulder at them now, he thanked his lucky stars that there were no Germans in the immediate neighbourhood.

"A handful of Uhlans could make short work of us," he thought. "What is one to do with starving men on starving horses? One thing is certain, they must be fed. I wonder whether there are any decent people in the village."

Apparently there was nobody there at all, decent or otherwise. No trace of an inhabitant was to be seen in the wide, snow-covered high road, or in the low white houses that bordered it; pigs and poultry—usually the inseparable adjuncts of a French village—there were none; every door was closed and every window shuttered; only from a chimney here and there arose a tell-tale thread of blue smoke. Saint-Luc had seen this kind of thing more than once before, and knew very well what it all meant. His orders to his officers were soon given. They were to get what was necessary—civilly if possible, but at all events to get it; they were to pay for everything they took; and, above all, they were to lose no time. He himself rode on, accompanied by Léon, his adjutant, to a farmhouse a few furlongs out of the village, where there was an empty straw-yard, and stables, and outhouses, and a rick or two. Here, much shouting, thundering at the door and threatening of arson, as a last resource, revealed the presence of a lean old woman of forbidding aspect.

"What do you want?" asked this inhospitable person sullenly, thrusting her head out of a half-opened window.

"Something to eat, to begin with," answered Léon. "We are not particular; give us what you have got and let us go, and we will pay you a fair price. We have money."

"Well, then, you will not have what you want, money or no money. I know you with your money! Break open the door if you like—you are the stronger—and eat me, for you will find nothing else here! And you will not find much flesh upon my bones, I promise you."

"My good woman," began Saint-Luc.

"Good woman here, good woman there! I tell you we have got nothing. Do you understand?—nothing! First come, first served. The Prussians took all we had; then came the Garibaldians and helped themselves to the rest; and now there are but the four walls and the bare boards left for you."

"I can't waste any more time," said Saint-Luc. "Tell them to force the door, de Mersac."

"Stop, you thieves! you villains! Do you call yourselves Frenchmen, and would you ruin a poor widow? I will let you in."

Bolts and chains were slowly withdrawn; the door was gingerly opened an inch or two, and a skinny hand appeared through the aperture. "Pay first," said the voice of the old woman from within.

Saint-Luc laughed, and handed out a couple of napoleons. "That will do till we see what you are going to give us," said he, pushing past her into the darkened kitchen, where a fine wood fire was blazing. "You

might remember that we are friends, and that we are fighting your battles for you, old mother."

"Friends or enemies, it comes to much the same thing. Ah! those Garibaldians! People who call themselves friends, and rob you of your last sou, and use the churches for stables—thank you! the Prussians suit me quite as well."

"Nobody is going to rob you," said Léon, who had followed his chief into the house, and was looking about him with somewhat hungry eyes. "And why did you tell us those lies? You peasants are all the same."

"How was I to know you had money?" retorted his hostess, upon whom the sight of gold had already produced a slight mellowing effect. "I am not the only one who tells lies in these bad times, young gentleman. And what I said was not so far off the truth either. I can kill two or three fowls for you and the other officer, and there is a little bacon; but as for the soldiers, I could not feed them if you offered me a fortune. Search the house if you don't believe me."

Léon took her at her word. There would be no harm in having a look round, he thought, while the chickens were roasting, and it was absolutely necessary that something should be discovered for the men's eternal soup. French soldiers, as is well known, have a semi-miraculous gift for the concoction of that savoury mess out of the most unpromising materials; and though Léon's researches were not crowned with any brilliant success, yet a sufficiency of scraps was ultimately collected, in the farmhouse and elsewhere, to furnish what was required, and to restore the flagging spirits of the whole corps.

They were not hard to please, those gallant, ragged fellows. Give them soup, a fire to warm themselves by, and a tumbler or two of rough red wine, and they asked for nothing more. Enthusiastic they were no longer; but they were patient and willing, accustomed to hard knocks, hard fare, and scant thanks; ready for active service in any form; and now the rumour that they were for once about to take the offensive sufficed in itself to console them for a great deal. None of them had more than a very vague idea of where they were and of whither they were going; but these were mere matters of detail, and besides it was nothing new to them to be in the dark as to their whereabouts. The colonel, never given to be communicative, disliked being asked questions, and his officers, knowing this, seldom interrogated him. When they did so, their curiosity was not often gratified. Léon, who upon this occasion ventured to throw out a hint or two, got no information for his pains.

"Werder must be somewhere between Vesoul and Gray, I take it," said he, buckling up his sword, when the hasty repast was at an end; "but I suppose we shall know all about it before long. We are off on the old errand of course—feeling for the enemy to begin with, searching for our own general afterwards, and thinking ourselves more than lucky if we find the second as easily as the first. Well, it is better to be an éclaireur than a general after all; one obeys orders and asks no questions

—that is simple enough. Only I *should* like to know whether our object is to join Faidherbe or to make a raid into Germany.”

Saint-Luc was standing by the window looking out at the darkening landscape and the snowflakes, which were still dropping at intervals and freezing as they fell.

“There are so many things that one would like to know,” he remarked. “I should like, for instance, to know why I was born; but nobody will ever be able to tell me that;—and then I should like to know where I am to sleep to-night, which is a mystery that will be solved in a few hours. And I should like to know what certain people far away are doing at this moment, though I have no doubt at all that it is a very good thing for me that I can’t. Did it ever occur to you that if we knew the whole truth about everything, nine-tenths of us would most likely go and hang ourselves? Come, let us get to horse again, and follow our noses; and don’t you trouble yourself too much to find out whither the road is leading you. The more you knew of it the less you would like it perhaps.”

Already the bugles had sent forth their brief summons, and the regiment only awaited the colonel’s order to march. A few of the villagers—poverty-stricken, timorous-looking folks—had emerged from their hiding-places on discovering that the invaders were Frenchmen this time, not Prussians nor Garibaldini, and had now come shivering out into the road to see the last of these ragged horsemen, and to bid them God-speed. For good wishes cost nothing; and if there be anything that can warm the heart of the French peasant, it is probably the touch of hard coin.

As the little band began to move with a muffled trampling over the snow, and the clank of a sabre or the champing of a bit here and there, some of the men set up a low, melancholy chant. It was the familiar strain of the Marseillaise that they sang; but what a different Marseillaise from that which had rung triumphantly and defiantly throughout the length and breadth of France a few short months before!—

“Amour sacré de la patrie,
Conduis, soutiens nos bras vengeurs!”

The chorus spread through the ranks, one man after another taking it up in a sad perfunctory sort of way, and grew fainter and fainter as they passed out from the village, and wound round the shoulder of a low hill—a straggling troop of shadowy riders in long blue cloaks that soon faded into the gathering darkness.

“Would one not say they were a regiment of ghosts singing their own dirge!” muttered the old woman who had entertained Saint-Luc and Léon. “Soldiers were another race in my time. That colonel is a fine man, but he has not the look of a joyous comrade. *Enfin!—puisque ça paye.*”

And with that she bolted and barred her door once more, and sat down to count her earnings.

